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"WE OF THE FLANNEL SHIRT AND THE UNBLACKED BOOT."
Frontispiece.

Through
the
Yukon Gold Diggings

A Narrative of Personal Travel

BY

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* * *

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JOSIAH EDWARD SPURR

Preface.

AS a geologist of the United States Geological Survey, I had the good fortune to be placed in charge of the first expedition sent by that department into the interior of Alaska. The gold diggings of the Yukon region were not then known to the world in general, yet to those interested in mining their renown had come in a vague way, and the special problem with which I was charged was their investigation. The results of my studies were embodied in a report entitled: "Geology of the Yukon Gold District," published by the Government.

It was during my travels through the mining regions that the Klondike discovery, which subsequently turned so many heads throughout all of the civilized nations, was made. General conditions of mining, travelling and prospecting are much the same to-day as they were at that time, except in the limited districts into which the flood of miners has poured. My travels in Alaska have been extensive since the journey of which this work is a record, and I have noted the same scenes that are herein described, in many other parts of the vast untravelled Territory. It will take two or three decades or more, to make alterations in this region and change the condition throughout.

In recording, therefore, the scenes and hardships encountered in this northern country, I describe the experiences of one who to-day knocks about the Yukon region, the Copper River region, the Cook Inlet region, the Koyukuk, or the Nome District. My aim has been throughout, to set down what I saw and encountered as fully and simply as possible, and I have endeavored to keep myself from sacrificing accuracy to picturesqueness. That my duties led me to see more than would the ordinary traveller, I trust the following pages will bear witness.

Let the reader, therefore, when he finds tedious or unpleasant passages, remember that they record tedious or unpleasant incidents that one who travels this vast region cannot escape, as will be found should any of those who peruse these pages go THROUGH THE YUKON GOLD DIGGINGS.

AUTHOR.

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Through
The Yukon Gold Diggings.

Before the Klondike Discovery.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRIP TO DYEA.

IT was in 1896, before the Klondike boom. We were seated at the table of an excursion steamer, which plied from Seattle northward among the thousand wonderful mountain islands of the Inland Passage. It was a journey replete with brilliant spectacles, through many picturesque fjords from whose unfathomable depths the bare steep cliffs rise to dizzy heights, while over them tumble in disorderly loveliness cataracts pure as snow, leaping from cliff to cliff in very wildness, like embodiments of the untamed spirits of nature.

We had just passed Queen Charlotte Sound, where the swells from the open sea roll in during rough weather, and many passengers were appearing at the table with the pale face and defiant look which mark the unfortunate who has newly committed the crime of seasickness. It only enhanced the former stiffness, which we of the flannel shirt and the unblacked boot had striven in vain to break—for these were people who were gathered from the corners of the earth, and each individual, or each tiny group, seemed to have some invisible negative attraction for all the rest, like the little molecules which, scientists imagine, repel their neighbors to the very verge of explosion. They were all sight-seers of experience, come, some to do Alaska, some to rest from mysterious labors, some—but who shall fathom at a glance an apparently dull lot of apparent snobs? At any rate, one would have thought the everlasting hills would have shrunk back and the stolid glaciers blushed with vexation at the patronizing way with which they were treated in general. It was depressing—even European tourists' wordy enthusiasm over a mud puddle or a dunghill would have been preferable.

There are along this route all the benefits of a sea trip—the air, the rest—with none of its disadvantages. So steep are the shores that the steamer may often lie alongside of them when she stops and run her gang-plank out on the rocks. These stops show the traveller the little human life there is in this vast and desolate country. There are villages of the native tribes, with dwellings built in imitation of the common American fashion, in front of which rise great totem poles, carved and painted, representing grinning and grotesque animal-like, or human-like, or dragon-like figures, one piled on top of the other up to the very top of the column. A sort of ancestral tree, these are said to be,—only to be understood with a knowledge of the sign symbolism of these people—telling of their tribe and lineage, of their great-grandfather the bear, and their great-grandmother the wolf or such strange things.

The people themselves, with their heavy faces and their imitation of the European dress—for the tourist and the prospector have brought prosperity and the thin veneer of civilization to these southernmost tribes of Alaska—with their

An Alaskan Genealogical Tree.

flaming neckerchief or head-kerchief of red and yellow silk that the silk-worm had no part in making, but only the cunning Yankee weaver, paddle out in boats dug from the great evergreen trees that cover the hills so thickly, and bring articles made of sealskin, or skilfully woven baskets made out of the fibres of spruce roots, to sell to the passengers. Or the steamer may stop at a little hamlet of white pioneers, where there is fishing for halibut, with perhaps some mining for gold on a small scale; then the practical men of the party, who have hitherto been bored, can inquire whether the industry pays, and contemplate in their suddenly awakened fancies the possibilities of a halibut syndicate, or another Treadwell gold mine. So the artist gets his colors and forms, the business man sees wonderful possibilities in this shockingly unrailroaded wilderness, the tired may rest body and mind in the perfect peace and freedom from the human element, old ladies may sleep and young ones may flirt meantimes.

All this would seem to prove that the passengers were neither professional nor business men, nor young nor old ladies—part of which appeared to me manifestly, and the rest probably untrue; or else that they were all enthusiastic and interested in the dumb British-American way, which sets down as vulgar any betrayal of one's self to one's neighbors.

Some one at the table wearily and warily inquired when we should get to the Muir glacier, on which point we of the flannel-shirted brotherhood were informed; and incidentally we remarked that we intended to leave the festivities before that time, in Juneau.

"Oh my!" said the sad-faced, middle-aged lady with circles about her eyes. "Stay in Juneau! How dreadful! Are you going as missionaries, or," here she wrestled for an idea, "or are you simply going."

"We are going to the Yukon," we answered, "from Juneau. You may have heard of the gold fields of the Yukon country." And strange and sweet to say, at this later day, no one had heard of the gold fields—that was before they had become the rage and the fashion.

But the whole table warmed with interest—they were as lively busybodies as other people and we were the first solution to the problems which they had been putting to themselves concerning each other since the beginning of the trip. There was a fire of small questions.

"How interesting!" said an elderly young lady, who sat opposite. "I suppose you will have *all kinds* of experiences, just *roughing* it; and will you take your food with you on—er—wagons—or will you depend on the farmhouses along the way? Only," she added hastily, detecting a certain gleam in the eye of her vis-a-vis, "I didn't think there were many farmhouses."

"They will ride horses, Jane," said the bluff old gentleman who was evidently her father, so authoritatively that I dared not dispute him—"everybody does in that country." Then, as some glanced out at the precipitous mountain-side and dense timber, he added, "Of course, not here. In the interior it is flat, like our plains, and one rides on little horses,—I think they call them kayaks—I have read it," he said, looking at me fiercely. Then, as we were silent, he continued, more condescendingly, "I have roughed it myself, when I was young. We used to go hunting every fall in Pennsylvania, when I was a boy, and once two of us went off together and were gone a week, just riding over the roughest country roads and into the mountains on horseback. If our coffee had not run out we would have stayed longer."

"But isn't it dreadfully cold up there?" said the sweet brown-eyed girl, with a look in her eyes that wakened in our hearts the first momentary rebellion against our exile. "And the wild animals! You will suffer so."

"I used to know an explorer," said the business man with the green necktie, who had been dragged to the shrine of Nature by his wife. He had brought along an entire copy of the New York *Screamer*, and buried himself all day long in its parti-colored mysteries. "He told me many things that might be useful to you, if I could remember them. About spearing whales—for food, you know—you will have to do a lot of that. I wish I could have you meet him sometime; he could tell you much more than I can. Somebody said there was gold up there. Was it you? Well don't get frozen up and drift across the Pole, like Nansen, just to get where the gold is. But I suppose the nuggets ——"

"Let's go on deck, Jane," said the old gentleman;—then to us, politely but firmly, "I have been much interested in your account, and shall be glad to hear more later." We had not said anything yet.

We disembarked at Juneau. We had watched the shore for nearly the whole trip without perceiving a rift in the mountains through which it looked feasible to pass, and at Juneau the outlook or uplook was no better. Those who have been to Juneau (and they are now many) know how slight and almost insecure is its foothold; how it is situated on an irregular hilly area which looks like a great landslide from the mountains towering above, whose sides are so sheer that the wagon road which winds up the gulch into Silver Bow basin is for some distance in the nature of a bridge, resting on wooden supports and hugging close to the steep rock wall. The excursionists tarried a little here, buying furs at extortionate prices from the natives, fancy baskets, and little ornaments which are said to be made in Connecticut.

In the hotel the proprietor arrived at our business in the shortest possible time, by the method of direct questioning. He was from Colorado, I judged—all the men I have known that look like him come from Colorado. There was also a heavily bearded man dressed in ill-fitting store-clothes, and with a necktie which had the strangest air of being ill at ease, who was lounging near by, smoking and spitting on the floor contemplatively.

"Here, Pete," said the proprietor, "I want you to meet these gentlemen." He pronounced the last word with such a peculiar intonation that one felt sure he used it as synonomous with "tenderfeet" or "paperlegs" or other terms by which Alaskans designate greenhorns.

I had rather had him call me "this feller." "He says he's goin' over the Pass, an' maybe you can help each other." Pete smiled genially and crushed my hand, looking me full in the eye the while, doubtless to see how I stood the ordeal. "Pete's an old timer," continued the hotel-man, "one of the Yukon pioneers. Been over that Pass—how many times, Pete, three times, ain't it?"

"Dis makes dirt time," answered Pete, with a most unique dialect, which nevertheless was Scandinavian. "Virst time, me an' Frank Densmore, Whisky Bill an' de odder boys. Dat was summer som we washed on Stewart River, on'y us—fetched out britty peek sack dat year—eh?" He had a curious way of retaining the Scandinavian relative pronoun *som* in his English, instead of *who* or *that*.

"You bet, Pete," answered the other, "you painted the town; done your duty by us."

"Ja," said Pete, "blewed it in; mostly in 'Frisco. Was king dat winter till dust was all been spent. Saw tings dat was goot; saw udder tings was too bad, efen for Alaskan miner. One time enough. I tink dese cities kind of bad fer people. So I get out. Sez I,—'I jes' got time to get to Lake Bennett by time ice breaks,' so I light out." He smiled happily as he said this, as a man might talk of going home, then continued, "Den secon' dime I get a glaim Forty Mile, Miller Greek,—dat's really Sixty Mile, but feller gits dere f'm Forty Mile. Had a pardner, but he went down to Birch Greek, den I work my glaim alone."

He put his hand down in his trousers pocket and brought up a large flat angular piece of gold, two inches long; it had particles of quartz scattered through, and was in places rusty with iron, but was mostly smooth and showed the wearing it must have had in his pocket. He shoved the yellow lump into my hand. "Dat nugget was de biggest in my glaim dat I found; anoder feller he washed over tailin's f'm my glaim efter, an' he got bigger nuggets, he says, but I tinks he's dam liar. Anyhow, I get little sack an' I went down 'Frisco, an' I blewed it in again. Now I go back once more."

We talked awhile and finally agreed to make the trip to Forty Mile together, since we were all bound to this place, and Pete, unlike most miners and prospectors, had no "pardner." We were soon engaged in making the rounds of the shops, laying in our supplies—beans, bacon, dried fruit, flour, sugar, cheese, and, most precious of all, a bucket of strawberry jam. We made up our minds to revel in jam just as long as we were able, even if we ended up on plain flour three times a day. For a drink we took tea, which is almost universally used in Alaska, instead of coffee, since a certain weight of it will last as long as many times the same weight of coffee: moreover, there is some quality in this beverage which makes it particularly adapted to the vigorous climate and conditions of this northern country. Men who have never used tea acquire a fondness for it in Alaska, and will drink

BACON, LORD OF ALASKA.

vast quantities, especially in the winter. The Russians, themselves the greatest tea-drinkers of all European nations, long ago introduced "Tschai" to the Alaskan natives; and throughout the country they will beg for it from every white man they meet, or will travel hundreds of miles and barter their furs to obtain it.

Concerning the amount of supplies it is necessary to take on a trip like ours, it may be remarked that three pounds of solid food to each man per day, is liberal. As to the proportion, no constant estimate can be made, men's appetites varying with the nature of the articles in the rations and their temporary tastes. On this occasion Pete picked out the supplies, laying in what he judged to be enough of each article: but it appeared afterwards that a man may be an experienced pioneer, and yet never have solved the problem of reasonably accurate rations, for some articles were soon exhausted on our trip, while others lasted throughout the summer, after which we were obliged to bequeath the remainder to the natives. Camp kettles, and frying-pans, of course, were in the outfit, as well as axes, boat-building tools, whip-saw, draw-shave, chisels, hammers, nails, screws, oakum and pitch. It was our plan to build a boat on the lakes which are the source of the Yukon, felling the spruce trees, and then with a whip-saw slicing off boards, which when put together would carry us down the river to the gold diggings.

For our personal use we had a single small tent, A-shaped, but with half of one of the large slanting sides cut out, so that it could be elevated like a curtain, and, being secured at the corners by poles or tied by ropes to trees, made an additional shelter, while it opened up the interior of the tent to the fresh air or the warmth of the camp-fire outside. Blankets for sleeping, and rubber blankets to lay next to the ground to keep out the wet; the best mosquito-netting or "bobinet" of hexagonal mesh, and stout gauntleted cavalry gloves, as protection against the mosquitoes. For personal attire, anything. Dress on the frontier, above all in Alaska, is always varied, picturesque, and unconventional. Flannel or woollen shirts, of course, are universal; and for foot gear the heavy laced boot is the best.

As usual, we were led by the prospective terrors of cold water in the lakes and streams to invest in rubber boots reaching to the hip, which, however, did not prove of such use as anticipated. We had brought with us canvas bags designed for packing, or carrying loads on the back, of a model long used in the Lake Superior woods. They were provided with suitable straps for the shoulders, and a broad one for the top of the head, so that the toiler, bending over, might support a large part of the load by the aid of his rigid neck. These we utilized also as receptacles for our clothes and other personal articles.

Other men were in Juneau also, bound for the Yukon,—not like the hordes that the Klondike brought up later from the States, many of whom turned back before even crossing the passes, but small parties of determined men. We ran upon them here and there. In the hotel we sat down at the table with a self-contained man with a suggestion of recklessness or carelessness in his face, and soon found that he was bound over the same route as ourselves, on a newspaper mission. Danlon, as we may call him, had brought his manservant with him, like the Englishman he was. He was a great traveller, and full of interesting anecdotes of Afghanistan, or Borneo, or some other of the earth's corners. He had engaged to go with him a friend of Pete's, another pioneer, Cooper by name, short, blonde and powerfully built. Between us, we arranged for a tug to take us the hundred miles of water which still lay between us and Dyea, where the land journey begins; after which transaction, we sat down to eat our last dinner in civilization. How tearfully, almost, we remarked that this was the last plum-pudding we should have for many a moon!

We sailed, or rather steamed away, from Juneau in the evening. Our tug had been designed for freight, and had not been altered in the slightest degree for the accommodation of passengers. Her floor space, too, was limited, so that while ten or twelve men might have made themselves very comfortable, the fifty or sixty who finally appeared on board found hard work to dispose of themselves in any fashion. She had been originally engaged for our two parties, but new passengers continually applied, who, from the nature of things, could hardly be refused. So the motley crowd of strangers huddled together, the engines began clanking, and the lights of Juneau soon dropped out of sight, as we steamed up Lynn Canal under the shadow of the giant mountains.

Our fellow-passengers were mostly prospectors; nearly all newcomers, as we could see by the light of the lantern which hung up in the bare apartment where we were. They had their luggage and outfit with them, which they piled up and sat or slept on, to make sure they would not lose it. There were men with grey beards and strapping boys with down on their chins; white handed men and those whose huge horny palms showed a life of toil; all strange, uneasy, and quiet at first, but soon they began to talk confidentially, as men will whom chance throws together in strange places.

There was a Catholic priest bound to his mission among the Eskimos on the lower Yukon, —calm, patient, sweet-tempered, and cheerful of speech; and near him was a noted Alaskan pioneer and trader, bound on some wild trip or other alone. There was another Alaskan—one of those who settle down and take native women as mates and are therefore somewhat scornfully called "squaw-men"; he had been to Juneau as the countryman visits the metropolis, and had brought back with him abundant evidence of the worthlessness of the no-liquor laws of Alaska, in the shape of a lordly drunk, and the material for many more, in a large demijohn, which he guarded carefully. The conversation among this crowd was of the directest sort, as it is always on the frontier.

"Where are *you* goin', pardner? Prospectin', I reckon?"

Then inquiries as to what each could tell the other concerning the conditions of the land we were to explore, mostly unknown to all: and straightway Pete and Cooper were constituted authorities, by virtue of their previous experience, and were listened to with great deference by the rest. The night was not calm, and the little craft swashed monotonously into the waves. One by one the travellers lay down on the bare dusty floor and slept; and so limited was the room that the last found it difficult to find a place.

Glancing around to find a vacant nook I was struck with the picturesqueness of the scene. Under the lantern the last talkers—the Catholic priest in a red sweater, smoking a bent pipe, the professional traveller and book-maker, and another Englishman with smooth face and oily manners,—were discussing matters with as much reserve and decorum as they would in a drawing-room. Around them lay stretched out, over the floor, under the table, and even on it, motley-clad men, breathing heavily or staring with wide fixed eyes overhead. The pioneer had gone to sleep lying on his back and was snoring at intervals, but by a physical feat hard to understand, retained his quid of tobacco, which he chewed languidly through it all. The only space I could find was in a narrow passageway leading to the pilot-house. Here I coiled myself, hugging closely to the wall, but it was dark and throughout the night I was awakened by heavy boots accidentally placed on my body or head; yet I was too sleepy to hear the apologies and straightway slept again.

It was natural, under the circumstances, that all should be early risers, and we were ravenously hungry for the breakfast which was tardily prepared. The only table was covered with oilcloth, and was calculated for four, but about eight managed to crowd around it: yet with all possible haste the last had breakfast about noon. We sat down where a momentary opening was offered at the third or fourth sitting. A moment later a couple of prospectors appeared who apparently had counted on places, and the hungry stomach of one of them prompted some very audible mutterings to the effect that all men were born free and equal, and he was as good as any one. The priest immediately got up, and with sincere kindness offered his seat, which so overcame the man with shame that he politely refused and retired; but the rest of us insisted on crowding together and making room for him. And for the remainder of the trip a more punctiliously polite individual than this same prospector could not be found.

After each round of eaters, the tin plates and cups and the dingy black knives and forks were seized by a busy dishwasher, who performed a rapid hocus-pocus over them, in which a tiny dishpan filled with hot water that came finally to have the appearance and consistency of a hodge-podge, played an important part; then they were skillfully shyed on to the table again. I looked at my plate. Swimming in the shallow film of dish-water, were flakes of beans, shreds of corned-beef and streaks of apple-sauce, which took me back in fancy to all the different tables that had eaten before: the boat was swaying heavily and I gulped down my stomach before I passed the plate to the dishwasher and suggested wiping. He was a very young man, remarkably dashing, like the hero of a dime novel. He was especially proficient in profanity and kept up a running fire of insults on the cook. He took the plate and eyed me scornfully, witheringly.

"Seems to me some tenderfeet is mighty perticklér," said he, with a very evident personal application, then swabbed out the plate with a towel, the sight of which made me turn and stare at the spruce-clad mountain-sides, in a desperate effort to elevate my mind and my stomach above trifles.

"This is no place for a white man," said a prospector who had been staring out of the door all day. "Good enough for bears and—and—Siwash, maybe." Most, I think shared more or less openly his depression, for the shores of Lynn Canal are no more attractive to the adventurer than the rest of the bleak Alaskan mountain coast.

It was a chilly, drizzling day. The clouds or-

31 LYNN CANAL.

dinarily hid the tops of the great steep mountains, so that these looked as if they might be walls that reached clear up to the heavens, or, when they broke away, exposed lofty snowy peaks, magnificent and gigantic in the mist. We caught glimpses of wrinkled glaciers, crawling down the valleys like huge jointed living things, in whose fronts the pure blue ice showed faintly and coldly. Here and there waterfalls appeared, leaping hundreds of feet from crag to crag, and all along was the rugged brown shore, with the surf lashing the cliffs, and no place where even a boat might land. All men, whether they clearly perceive it or not, find in the phenomena of Nature some figurative meanings, and are depressed or elevated by them.

We anchored in the lee of a bare rounded mountain that night, it being too rough to attempt landing, and the next morning were off Dyea, where we were to go ashore. The surf was still heavy, but the captain ventured out in a small boat to get the scow in which passengers and goods were generally conveyed to the shore; for the water was shallow, and the steamer had to keep a mile or so from the land. In the surf the boat capsized, and we could see the captain bobbing up and down in the breakers, now on top, now under his boat, in the icy water. The dishwasher, who evidently knew the course of action in all such emergencies from dime-novel precedents, yelled out "Man the lifeboat!" The captain had taken the only boat there was. The entire crew, it may be mentioned, consisted, besides the dishwasher and the captain, of the sailor, who was also the cook. The duty of manning the lifeboat—had there been one—would thus apparently have devolved on the sailor, but he grew pale and swore that he did not know how to row and that he had just come from driving a milk-wagon in San Francisco. A party of prospectors became engaged in a heated discussion as to whether, if there had been a boat on board, it would not have been foolish to venture out in it, even for the sake of trying to rescue the captain; some urging the claims of heroism, and others loudly proclaiming that they would not risk *their* lives in any such d——d foolish way as that.

However, all this was only the froth and excitement of the moment. The captain hauled his boat out of the breakers, skillfully launched it again, and came on board, shivering but calm, a strapping, reckless Cape Breton Scotch-Canadian. In due course of time afterwards the scow was also got out, and we transferred our outfits to it and sat on top of them, while we were slowly propelled ashore by long oars.

CHAPTER II.

OVER THE CHILKOOT PASS.

AT this time there was only one building at Dyea—a log house used as a store for trading with the natives, and known by the name of Healy's Post. (Two years afterwards, on returning to the place, I found a mushroom, sawed-board town of several thousand people; but that was after the Klondike boom.) We pitched our tents near the shore that night, spreading our blankets on the ground.

In the morning all were bustling around, following out their separate plans for getting over the Pass as soon as possible. Of the different notches in the mountain wall by which one may cross the coast range and arrive at the head waters of the Yukon, the Chilkoot, which is reached from Dyea, was at that time the only one practicable. It was known that Jack Dalton, a pioneer trader of the country, was wont to go over the Chilkat Pass, a little further south, while Schwatka, Hayes, and Russell, in an expedition of which few people ever heard, had crossed by the way of the Taku River and the Taku Pass to the Hootalinqua or Teslin River, which is one of the important streams that unite to make up the upper Yukon. But the White Pass, which afterwards became the most popular, and which lies just east of the Chilkoot, was at that time entirely unused, being a rough long trail that required clearing to make it serviceable.

The Chilkoot, though the highest and steepest of the passes, was yet the shortest and the most free from obstructions; it had been, before the advent of the white adventurer in Alaska, the avenue of travel for the handful of half-starved interior natives who were wont to come down occasionally to the coast, for the purpose of trading. The coast Indians are, as they always have been, a more numerous, more prosperous, stronger and more quarrelsome class, for the sea yielded them, directly and indirectly, a varied and bountiful subsistence. The particular tribe who occupied the Dyea region,—the Chilkoots—were accustomed to stand guard over the Pass and to exact tribute from all the interior natives who came in; and when the first white men appeared, the natives tried in the same way to hinder them from crossing and so destroying their monopoly of petty traffic. For a short time this really prevented individuals and small parties from exploring, but in 1878 a party of nineteen prospectors, under the leadership of Edmund Bean, was organized, and to overcome the hostility of the Chilkoots, a sort of military "demonstration" was arranged by the officers in charge at Sitka. The little gunboat stationed there proceeded to Dyea, and, anchoring, fired a few blank shots from her heaviest (or loudest) guns; afterwards the officer in charge went on shore, and made a sort of unwritten treaty or agreement with the thoroughly frightened natives, by which the prospectors, and all others who came after, were allowed to proceed unmolested.

The fame of that "war-canoe" spread from Indian to Indian throughout the length and breadth of the vast territory of Alaska. One can hear it from the natives in many places a thousand miles from where the incident occurred, and each time the story is so changed and disguised, that it might be taken for a myth by an enthusiastic mythologist, and carefully preserved, with all its vagaries, and very likely proved to be an allegory of the seasons, or the travels of the sun, moon, and stars. In proportion as the story reached more and more remote regions, the statements of the proportions of the canoe became more and more exaggerated, and the thunder of the guns more terrible, and the number of warriors on board increased faster than Jacob's flock. The gunboat was the butt for many good-natured jokes from navy officers, on account of her small dimensions and frail construction. Yet the natives a little way into the interior will tell you of the wonderful snow-white war-canoe, half a mile long, armed with guns a hundred yards or so in length; and by the time one gets in the neighborhood of the Arctic Circle, he will hear of the "great ship" (the native will perhaps point to some mountain eight or ten miles away) "as long as from here to the mountain"; how she vomited out smoke, fire and ashes like a volcano, and at the same time exploded her guns and killed many people, and how she ran forwards and backwards, with the wind or against it, at a terrific speed,—a formidable monster, truly!

At the time of our trip (in 1896) the immigration into the Yukon gold country had gone on, in a small way, for some years; several mining districts were well developed, and the natives had settled down into the habit of helping the white man, for a substantial remuneration. These natives were all camped or housed close to the shore. They were odd and interesting at first sight. The men were of fair size, strong, stolid, and sullen-looking; clothed in cheap civilized garb in this summer season,—it was in the early part of June—in overalls and jumpers, with now and then a woollen Guernsey jacket, and with straw hats on their heads. The women were neither beautiful nor attractive. Many of them had covered their faces with a mixture of soot and grease, which stuck well. Other women had their chins tattooed in stripes with the indelible ink of the cuttlefish—sometimes one, sometimes three, sometimes five or six stripes. This custom I found afterwards among the women of many tribes and peoples in different parts of Alaska, and it seems, in some regions at least, to be a mark of aristocracy, indicating the wealth of the parents at the time the girl-child was born. All the natives were living in tents or rude wooden huts, in the most primitive fashion, cooking by a smouldering fire outside, and sleeping packed close together, wrapped in skins and dirty blankets.

Alaskan Women and Children.

It had been the custom of the miners to engage these natives to carry their outfits for them, from Dyea, and some of the men who had come with us, immediately hired packers for the whole trip to Lake Lindeman, paying them, I think, eleven cents a pound for everything carried. The storekeeper, however, had been constructing a foot trail for about half the distance and had bought a few pack-horses, and we engaged these to transport our outfit as far as possible, trusting to Indians for the rest. We had brought with us from Juneau, on a last sudden idea, a lot of lumber with which to build our boat when we should get to Lake Lindeman, and here the transportation of this lumber became a great problem. To pack it on the horses was an impossibility, and the Indians refused absolutely to take the boards unless they were cut in two, which would destroy much of their value, and even if this were done, demanded an enormous price for the carrying; therefore it was concluded to leave them behind, and trust to good luck in the future.

In one way or another, everybody was furnished with some kind of transportation, and the whole visible population of Dyea, permanent or transient, began moving up the valley. Some of the natives put their loads in wooden dugout canoes, which they paddled, or pushed with poles, six or seven miles up the small stream which goes by the name of the Dyea River; others took their packs on their backs, and led the way along the trail. Not stronger, perhaps, than white men, the Chilkoots showed themselves remarkably patient and enduring, carrying heavy loads rapidly long distances without resting. Not only the men, but the women and children, made pack-animals of themselves. I remember a slight boy of thirteen or so, who could not have weighed over eighty pounds, carrying a load of one hundred. The dog belonging to the same family, a medium-sized animal, waddled along with a load of about forty pounds; he seemed to be imbued with the same spirit as the rest, and although the load nearly dragged him to the ground, he was patient and persevering.

The trail was a tiresome one, being mostly through loose sand and gravel alongside the stream: several times we had to wade across. As we went up, the valley became narrower, and we had views of the glacier above us, which reached long slender fingers down the little valleys from the great ice-mass on the mountain. It was evident that the glacier had once filled the entire valley. As soon as we were up a little we were obliged to clamber over the piled-up boulders in the strips of moraine which the ice had left; in places the rows were so regular that they had the appearance of stone walls.

We were seized with fatigue and a terrible hunger. "You haven't a sandwich about your clothes, have you?" I asked of some prospectors whom I overtook resting in the lee of a cliff. Here the stream becomes so rough and rapid that the natives can work their canoes no further, and so the place has been somewhat pompously named on some maps the "Head of Navigation," by which most people infer that a gunboat may steam up this far.

"No, by ——, pardner," was the answer, "if we had, we'd a' eaten it ourselves before now."

Crossing the stream for the last time, on the trunk of a fallen tree, which swayed alarmingly, the trail led up steeply among the bare rocks of the hillside. All the pedestrian groups had separated into singles by this time, every one going his "ain gait" according to his own ideas and strength, and in no mood for conversation. I overtook a young Irishman, who had started out with a pack of about seventy-five pounds; he was resting, and quite downcast with fatigue and hunger.

Just where we stopped some one had left a load of canned corn and tomatoes. We eyed them hungrily, and gravely discussed our rights to helping ourselves. We did not know the owners and could not find them—certainly they were none of those that had come with us. We could not take them and leave money, for although the natives respected "caches" of provisions, we could not expect them to do the same with money. "Again," said the Irishman, "the feller what lift them here may be dipinding on every blissed can of swate corn for some little schayme of his, while we have plenty grub of our own, if we can on'y get our flippers on it."

At this period, all through Alaska, provisions and other property was regarded with utmost respect. Old miners and prospectors have told me that they have left provisions exposed in a "cache" for a year, and on returning after having been hundreds of miles away, have found them untouched, although nearly starving natives had passed them almost daily all winter. In the mining camps the same custom prevailed. Locks were unknown on the doors. When a white man arrived at the hut of an absent prospector, he helped himself, taking enough provisions from the "cache" to keep him out of want, till he could make the next stage of his journey, and wrote on paper or on the wooden door, "I have taken twenty pounds of flour, ten pounds of bacon, five pounds of beans, and a little tea," signed his name, and departed. It was not a bill, but an acknowledgment; and to have left without making the acknowledgment constituted a theft, in the eyes of the miner population. This condition of primitive honesty did not last, however. Later, with the Klondike boom, came the ordinary light-fingeredness of civilization, and a state of affairs unique and instructive passed away.

We arrived finally at the end of the horse-trail, a spot named Sheep Camp by an early party of prospectors who killed some mountain sheep here. Steep, rocky and snowy mountains overhang the valley, with a vast glacier not far up; and here, since our visit, have occurred a number of fatal disasters, from snowslides and landslides. Pete had arrived before us: he had set up a Yukon camp stove of sheet iron, had kindled fire therein and was engaged in the preparation of slapjacks and fried bacon, a sight that affected us so that we had to go and sit back to, and out of reach of the smell, till Pete yelled out in vile Chinook "Muk-a-muk altay! Bean on the table!" There were no beans and no table, of course, but that was Pete's facetious way of putting it.

Further than Sheep Camp the horse-trail was quite too rocky and steep for the animals; so we tried to engage Indians to take our freight for the remaining part of the distance across the Pass. Up to the time of our arrival, the regular price for packing from Dyea to Lake Lindeman had been eleven cents a pound. For the transportation by horses over the first half of the distance—thirteen miles—we had paid five cents a pound, and we had expected to pay the Indians six cents for the remainder of the trip. In the first place, however, it was difficult to gather the Indians together, for they were off in bands in different parts of the neighboring country, on expeditions of their own; and when they arrived in Sheep Camp, with a bluster and a racket, they were so set up by the number of men that were waiting for their help that they took it into their heads to be in no hurry about working. Finally they sent a spokesman who, with an insolence rather natural than assumed for the occasion, demanded nine cents per pound instead of six, for packing to Lake Lindeman. It was a genuine strike—the revolt of organized labor against helpless capital.

Being in a hurry to get ahead and fulfill our mission, we should doubtless have yielded; but there were many parties camped here besides ourselves—namely, all those who had been our fellow-sufferers on board the Scrambler—and a general consultation being held among the gold-hunters, it was decided that the proposed increase of pay for labor would prove ruinous to their business. A committee representing these gentlemen waited on us and begged us not to yield to the strikers, in the carelessness of our hearts and our plethoric pocketbooks, but to consider that in doing so they—the prospectors—must follow suit, the precedent being once established; whereas they were poor men, and could not afford the extra price. To this view of the case we agreed, considering ourselves as a part of the Sheep Camp community, rather than as an individual party; and the English traveller (who was likewise suspected of being overburdened with funds, and therefore likely to be careless with them) was also waited upon and persuaded to resist the demands. So everybody camped and waited, and was obstinate, for several days: not only the white men, but the Siwash.

By way of digression it may be mentioned that the word Siwash is indiscriminately applied by the white men to all the Alaskan natives, to whatever race—and there are many—they belong. The word therefore has no definite meaning, but corresponds roughly to the popular name of "nigger" for all very dark-skinned races, or "Dago" for Spaniards, Portuguese, Italians, Greeks, Turks, Armenians, and a host of other black-haired, olive-skinned nations. The name has been said to be a corruption of the French word "sauvage,"—savage,—and this seems very likely.

Like the corresponding epithets cited, the word

Siwash has a certain familiar, facetious, and contemptuous value, and this may have been the idea which prompted its use just now, when speaking of the natives as strikers and opponents. At any rate, they took the situation in a careless, matter-of-fact way; cooked, ate, slept, borrowed our kettles, begged our tea and stole our sugar with utmost cheerfulness, and were apparently contented and happy. We white men likewise tried to conceal our restlessness, and chatted in each others' tents, admired the scenery, or went rambling up the steep mountain-sides in search of experiences, exercise, and rocks. Some of us clambered over the huge boulders, each as big as a New England cottage, which had been brought here by glacial action, then up over the steep cliffs, wrenched and crumbling from the crushing of the same mighty force, supporting ourselves,—when the rocks gave way beneath our feet and went rattling down the cliff,—by the tough saplings that had taken root in the crevices, and grew out horizontally, or even inclined downwards, bent by continuous snowslides. So we reached the base of the glacier, where a sheer wall of clear blue ice rose to a height which we estimated at three or four hundred feet, back of which stretched a great uneven white ice field, as far as the eye could see, clear up till the view was lost in the mists of the upper mountains; an ice field seamed with great yawning crevasses, where the blue of the ice gleamed as streaks on the dead white.

One morning we heard a yell from the Siwash, and soon they came running over the little knoll which separated our camp from theirs, and began grabbing the articles that belonged to some of the miners. We were at a loss to know the meaning of what seemed at first to be a very unceremonious proceeding, but when we saw the miners, with many shamefaced glances at us, help the natives in the distribution of the material, we realized that these men had forsaken us and their resolutions; so greedy were they to reach the land of gold that they had gone to the natives and agreed to pay them the demanded rates on condition that they should have all the packers themselves, leaving none to us. We let these men and their natives go in peace, without even a reproach: less than a week afterwards we had the deep satisfaction of passing them on the trail, and even in lending them a hand in a series of little difficulties for which, in their haste, they had come unprepared. The veteran miner in Alaska is a splendid, open-hearted, generous fellow; the newcomer, or "chicharko," is a thing to be avoided.

After this we had to wait till the natives had got back from carrying the miners' supplies, and then we agreed, with what grace we could, to pay the price that the others had. The Indians were quite a horde, capable of carrying in one trip all the supplies belonging to our party and that of the English traveller. Since they were paid by the pound they vied in taking enormous loads; the largest carried was 161 pounds, but all the men's packs ranged from 125 to 150 pounds. Women and half-grown boys carried packs of 100 pounds. It was a "Stick" or interior Indian, named at the mission *Tom*, but originally possessed of a fearful and unpronounceable name, who carried the largest load. He was barely tolerated and was somewhat badgered by the Chilkoots, hence he fled much to the society of the whites, and would squat near for hours, always smiling horribly when looked at; he claimed to be a chief among his own wretched people, and spent all his spare time in blackening his face, reserving rings around the eyes which he smeared with red ochre—having done which, he grinned ghastly approval of himself!

Pete started over the Pass in advance of the party, to procure for us if possible a boat at Lake Lindeman.

"Dis is dirt time I gross Pass," said Pete. "Virst dime I dake leedle pack—den I vos blayed out; nex' dime I dake leedle roll of clo'es—den I vos blayed out too, py chimney: dis dime I dake notting—den I vill be blayed out too!"

The natives, after much shouting and confusion and wrangling, made up their packs about noon, and started out, we following; just before getting to snow-line they stopped in a place where a chaotic mass of boulders form a trifling shelter, grateful to wild beasts or wild men like these. Here they deposited their loads, and with exasperating indifference composed themselves to sleep. We tried to persuade them to go on, but to no avail, and we discovered afterwards, as often happened to us in our dealing with the natives, that they were right. It was June, and yet the snow lay deep on all the upper parts of the Pass; and in the long, warm days it became soft and mushy, making travel very difficult, especially with heavy packs. As soon as the sun went down behind the hills, however, the air became cool, and a hard crust formed, so that walking was much better.

We left the natives and followed a trail which led among the boulders and then higher up the mountain, where many moccasined feet had left a deep path through the icy snow. We tramped onward, sometimes on hard ice, sometimes through soft snow, strung out in Indian file, saying nothing, saving our breath for our lungs; at times the crust rang hollow to our tread, and beneath us we could hear torrents raging. It was about eight o'clock at night when we started, and the sun in the narrow valley had already gone down behind the high glaciers on the mountain-tops, even at this latitude and in the month of June; so the long northern twilight which is Alaska's substitute for night in the summer months soon began to settle down upon us. At the same time the moisture from the snow which all day long had been lying in the sun, began cooling into mists, changeful and of different thicknesses; and in the dim light gave to everything a weird and unnatural aspect.

Even our fellow-travellers were distorted and magnified, now lengthwise, now sidewise, so that those above us were powerful-limbed giants, striding up the hill, while those behind us were flattened and broadened, and seemed straddling along as grotesquely as spiders. When we drew near and looked at each other we were inclined to laugh, but there was something in the pale-blue, ghastly color of the faces that made us stop, half-frightened. At twelve o'clock it was so dark that we could hardly follow the trail; then we saw a fire gleaming like a will-o'-the-wisp somewhere above us, and clambering up the steep rock which stuck out of the snow and overhung the trail, we saw a couple of figures crouching over a tiny blaze of twigs and smoking roots. It was a native and his "klutchman" or squaw; he turned out to be deaf-and-dumb, but made signs to us,—as we squatted ourselves around the fire,—that the night was dark, the trail dangerous, and that it would be better to wait till it grew a little lighter. So we kept ourselves warm for a half-hour or more by our exertions in tearing up roots for a fire: the fire itself being nothing more than a smoky, flary pile of wet fagots, hardly enough to warm our numbed fingers by. Then a dim figure came toiling up to us. It was one of our packers, and he explained in broken, profane, and obscene English, of which he was very proud, (the foundation of his knowledge had been laid in the mission, and the trimmings, which were profuse and with the same idea many times repeated, like an art pattern, had been picked up from straggling whites) that the trail was good now. So we very gladly took up our march again.

Two of us soon got ahead of the guide and all the rest of our party, following the beaten track in the snow; after a while the ascent became very steep, as the last sheer declivity of the Pass was reached, and we began to suspect that we had strayed from the right path, for although here was a track, we could find no footprints on it, but only grooves as if from things which had slid down. Yet we decided not to go back, for we did not know how far we had strayed from the path, and the climbing was not so easy that we were anxious to do it twice. So we kept on upward, and the ascent soon became so steep that we were obliged to stop and kick footholds in the crust at every step.

It was twilight again, but still foggy, and we could see neither up nor down, only what appeared to be a vast chasm beneath us, wherein great indistinct shapes were slowly shifting—an impression infinitely more grand and appalling than the reality. At any rate, it made us very careful in every step, for we had no mind that a misplaced foot should send us sliding down the grooves we were following. At last we gained the top, found here again the trail we had lost, and waited for the rest. Around us, sticking out of the snow, were rocks, which appeared distorted and moving. It was the mists which moved past them, giving a deceptive effect. My companion suddenly exclaimed, "There's a bear!" On looking, my imagination gave the shape the same semblance, but on going towards it, it resolved itself very reluctantly into a rock, as if ashamed of its failure to "bluff." Most grown-up people, as well as children, I fancy, are more or less afraid of the dark—where the uncertain evidence of the eyes can be shaped by the imagination into unnatural things. Goethe must once have felt something like what Faust expressed when he stood at night in one of the rugged Hartz districts:

> "Seh' die Baüme hinter Baüme,
> Wie sie schnell vorüber rücken,
> Und die Klippen, die sich bücken,
> Und die langen Felsennasen,
> Wie sie schnarchen, wie sie blasen."

Presently the rest of the party came up from quite a different direction and with them a whole troop of packers. The main trail, from which we had strayed, was much longer, but not so steep; while the one we had followed was simply the mark of the articles which the packers were accustomed to send down from the summit to save carrying, while they themselves took the more circuitous route.

On the interior side of the summit is a small lake with steep sides, which the miners have named Crater Lake, fancying from the shape that it had been formed by volcanic action; it has no such origin however, but occupies what is known as a glacial cirque or amphitheatre—a deep hollow carved out of the dioritic mountain mass by the powerful wearing action of a valley glacier. This lake was still frozen and we crossed on the ice, then followed down the valley of the stream which flowed from it and led into another small lake. There are several of these small bodies of water and connecting streams before one reaches Lake Lindeman, which is several miles long, and is the uppermost water of the Yukon which is navigable for boats. Our path was devious, following the packers, but always along this valley. We crossed and recrossed the streams over frail and reverberant arches, half ice, half snow, which, already broken away in places, showed foaming torrents beneath. As we descended in elevation, the ice on the little lakes became more and more rotten and the snow changed to slush, through which we waded knee deep for miles, sometimes putting a foot through the ice into the water beneath.

We were all very tired by this time and were separated from one another by long distances, each silent, ~~and travelling on~~ his nerve. The Indian packers, too, in spite of their long experience, were tired and out of temper; but the most pitiful sight of all was to see the women, especially the old ones, bending under crushing loads, dragging themselves by sheer effort at every step, groaning and stopping occasionally, but again driven forward by the men to whom they belonged. One could not interfere; it was a family matter; and as among white people, the woman would have resented the interference as much as the man.

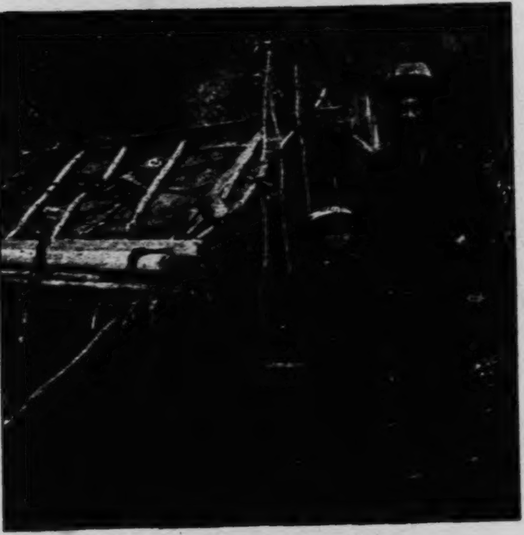
Finally we came to a lake where the water was almost entirely open and were obliged to skirt along its rocky shores to where we found a brawling and rocky stream entering it, cutting us off. After a moment of vain glancing up and down in search of a ford, we took to the water bravely, floundering among the boulders on the stream's bottom, and supporting ourselves somewhat with sticks. Afterwards we found a trail which led away from the lake high over the rocky hillside, where the rocks had been smoothed and laid bare by ancient glaciers, now vanished. Here we found the remnants of a camp, left by some one who had recently gone before us; we inspected the corned beef cans lying about rather hungrily, thinking that something might have been left over. Our only lunch since leaving Sheep Camp had been a small piece of chocolate and a biscuit. The biscuit possessed certain almost miraculous qualities, to which I ascribe our success in completing the trip and in arriving first among the travellers at Lake Lindeman. I myself was the concocter of this biscuit, but it was done in a moment of inspiration, and since I have forgotten certain mystic details, it probably could never be gotten together again. It was the first and last time that I have made biscuit in my life, and I did it simply for the purpose of instruction to the others, who were shockingly ignorant of such practical matters.

We had brought a reflector with us for baking, —a metal arrangement which is set up in front of a camp-fire, and, from polished metallic surfaces, reflects the heat up and down, on to a pan of biscuit or bread, which is slid into the middle. These utensils as used in the Lake Superior region, that home of good wood-craft, are made of sheet iron, tinned; but thinking to get a lighter article, I had one constructed out of aluminum. This first and last trial with our aluminum reflector at Sheep Camp showed us that one of the peculiar properties of this metal is that it reflects heat but very little, but transmits it, almost as readily as glass does light. So when I had arrived at the first stage of my demonstration and had the reflector braced up in front of the fire, I found that the dough remained obstinately dough, while the heat passed through the reflector and radiated itself around about Sheep Camp. Still I persisted, and after several hours of stewing in front of the fire, most of the water was evaporated from the dough, leaving a compact rubbery grey BISCUIT, as I termed it. I offered it for lunch and I ate one myself; no one else did, but I was rewarded by feeling a fullness all through the tramp, while the others were empty and famished. I also was sure that it gave me enormous strength and endurance; while some of the rest were unkind enough to suggest that the same high courage which led me up to the biscuit's mouth, figuratively speaking, kept me plugging away on the Lake Lindeman trail.

We reached Lake Lindeman at about nine o'clock in the morning, and found Pete and

Cooper already there. It was raining drearily and they had made themselves a shelter of poles and boughs under which they were lying contentedly enough, waiting until the packers should bring the tents. In a very short time after we had arrived all the natives were at hand, and setting down their packs demanded money. They could not be induced to accept bills, because they could not tell the denomination of them, and would as soon take a soap advertisement as a hundred-dollar note; they dislike gold, because they get so small a quantity of it in comparison with silver.

Like the Indians of the United States, the Alaskans formerly used wampum largely as a medium of exchange—small, straight, horn-shaped, rather rare shells, which were strung on thongs—but when the trading companies began shipping porcelain wampum into the country the natives soon learned the trick and stopped the use of it. I have in my possession specimens of this porcelain wampum, which I got from the agent of one of the large trading companies on the Yukon. Silver is now the favorite currency, whether or not on the basis of sound political economy; and each particular section has often a preference for some special coin, such as a quarter, ("two bits," as it is called in the language of the west coast) a half-dollar or a dollar.



ALASKAN INDIANS AND HOUSE.

Where the natives have had to deal only with quarters, you cannot buy anything for half-dollars, except for nearly double the price you would pay in quarters; while dimes, however large the quantity, would probably be refused entirely.

The Chilkoots, however, on account of their residence on the coast and consequent contact with the whites, had become more liberal in their views as regarded denomination of silver, but drew the line at bimetalism, and had no faith whatsoever in the United States as the fulfiller of promises to redeem greenbacks in silver coin. So there was some trouble in paying them satisfactorily; and after they were paid they came back, begging for a little flour, a little tea, etc., and keeping up the process with unwearied ardor till the supply was definitely shut off. The toughness of these people is well shown by the fact that when they had rested an hour and had cooked themselves a little food and drunk a little tea, they departed over the trail again for Sheep Camp, although they had made the same journey as the white men, who were all exhausted, and had, in addition, carried loads of as high as 160 pounds over the whole of the rough trail of thirteen miles. When affairs were settled we pitched our tents, rolled into our blankets, and for the next twenty hours slept.

CHAPTER III.

THE LAKES AND THE YUKON TO FORTY MILE.

UPON reaching Lake Lindeman, we found a number of other parties encamped,—men who had come over the trail before us, and had been delaying a short time, for different reasons. From one of these parties Pete had been lucky enough to buy a boat already built, so that we did not have to wait and build one ourselves—a job that would have consumed a couple of weeks. The boat was after the dory pattern, but sharp at both ends, made of spruce, lap-streaked and unpainted, with the seams calked and pitched; about eighteen feet long, and uncovered. During the trip later we decided that it ought to be christened, and so we mixed some soot and bacon-grease for paint, applied it hot to the raw, porous wood, and inscribed in shaky letters the words "*Skookum Pete*," as a compliment to our pilot. *Skookum* is a Chinook word signifying strength, courage, and other excellent qualities necessary for a native, a frontiersman, or any other dweller in the wilderness—qualities which were conspicuous in Pete. Pete was overcome with shame on reading the legend, however, and straightway erased his name, so that she was simply the SKOOKUM. And skookum she proved herself, in the two thousand miles we afterwards travelled, even though she sprung a leak occasionally or became obstinate when being urged up over a rapid.

It may be observed that the Chinook, to which this word belongs, is not a language, but a jargon, composed of words from many native American and also from many European tongues. It sprung up as a sort of universal language, which was used by the traders of the Hudson Bay Company in their intercourse with the natives, and is consequently widely known, but is poor in vocabulary and expression.

There were several boats ready to start, craft of all models and grades of workmanship, variously illustrating the efforts of the cowboy, the clerk, or the lawyer, at ship-carpentry. Several of us got off together in the morning, our boat carrying four, and the English traveller's boat the same number, for he had taken into his party the priest whom we had met on the Scrambler.

This gentleman, with a number of miners and a newspaper reporter, had been unlucky enough to fall into the trap of a certain transportation company, which had a very prettily furnished office in Seattle. This office was the big end of the company. As one went north towards the region where the company was supposed to be doing its transportation, it shrunk till nothing was left but a swindle. They promised for a certain sum of money to transport supplies and outfits over the Pass, and to have the entire expedition in charge of an experienced man, who would relieve one of all worry and bother; and after transportation across the Pass, to put their passengers on the COMPANY'S steamers, which would carry them to the gold fields. Even at Juneau the "experienced man" who was to take the party through, and who was a high officer of the company, kept up the ridiculous pretences and succeeded in obtaining a number of passengers for the trip. When these men learned later, however, that the guide had never yet been further than Juneau; that he had no means of transporting freight over the Pass; that the steamers existed only in fancy; and finally, when opportunity to hire help offered, that the leader had no funds, so that they were obliged to do all the work themselves, in order to move along: when they learned all this they were naturally a disgusted set of men, but having now given away their money, most of them decided to stick together till the diggings were reached. The priest, however, who was in a hurry, became nervous when he saw different parties leaving the rapid and elegant transportation company in the rear, and effected a separation.

When we left Sheep Camp, the manager was trying to cajole his passengers into carrying their own packs to the summit, even going so far as to take little loads himself—"just for exercise," as he airily informed us. He was an Englishman, of aristocratic tendencies, with an awe-inspiring acquaintance with titles. "You know Lord Dudson Dudley, of course," he would begin, fixing one with his eye as if to hypnotize; "his sister, you remember, made such a row by her flirtation with Sir Jekson Jekby.—Never heard of them?—

Humph!" And then with a look which seemed to say "What kind of a blarsted Philistine is this?" he would retreat to his own camp-fire.

We sailed down Lake Lindeman with a fair brisk wind, using our tent-fly braced against a pole, for a sail. The distance is only four or five miles, so that the lower end of the lake was reached in an hour. A mountain sheep was sighted on the hillside above us, soon after starting, and a long-range shot with the rifle was tried at it, but the animal bounded away.

At the lower end of this first of the Yukon navigable lakes there is a stream, full of little falls and rapids, which connects with Lake Bennett, a much larger body of water. According to Pete, the boat could not run these rapids, so we began the task of "lining" her down. With a long pole shod with iron, especially brought along for such work, Pete stood in the bow or stern, as the emergency called for, planting the pole on the rocks which stuck out of the water and so shoving and steering the boat through an open narrow channel, while we three held a long line and scrambled along the bank or waded in the shallow water. We had put on long rubber boots reaching to the hip and strapped to our belts, so at first our wading was not uncomfortable. On account of the roar of the water we could not hear Pete's orders, but could see his signals to "haul in," or "let her go ahead." On one difficult little place he manœuvered quite a while, getting stuck on a rock, signalling us to pull back, and then trying again. Finally he struck the right channel, and motioned energetically to us to go ahead. We spurted forward, waddling clumsily, and the foremost man stepped suddenly into a groove where the water was above his waist. Ugh! It was icy, but he floundered through, half swimming, half wading, dragging his great water-filled boots behind him like iron weights; and the rest followed. We felt quite triumphant and heroic when we emerged, deeming this something of a trial: we did not know that the time would come when it would be the ordinary thing all day long, and would become so monotonous that all feelings of novelty would be lost in a general neutral tint of bad temper and rheumatism.

On reaching shallow water the weight of the water-filled rubber boots was so great that we could no longer navigate among the slippery rocks, so we took turns going ashore and emptying them. There was a smooth round rock with steep sides, glaring in the sun; on this we stretched ourselves head down, so that the water ran out of our boots and trickled in cold little streams down our backs; then we returned to our work.

Before undertaking to line the Skookum through the rapids we had taken out a large part of the load and put it on shore, in order to lighten the boat, and also to save our "grub" in case our boat was capsized. The next task was to carry this over the half-mile portage. Packing is about the hardest and most disliked work that a pioneer has to do, and yet every one that travels hard and well in Alaska and similar rough countries must do it *ad nauseam.* In such remote and unfinished parts of the world transportation comes back to the original and simple phase,—carrying on one's back. The railroad and the steamboat are for civilization, the wheeled vehicle for the inhabited land where there are roads, the camel for the desert, the horse for the plains and where trails have been cut, but for a large part of Alaska Nature's only highways are the rivers, and when the water will not carry the burdens the explorer must.

In a properly-constructed pack-sack, the weight is carried partly by the shoulders but mainly by the neck, the back being bent and the neck stretched forward till the load rests upon the back and is kept from slipping by the head strap, which is nearly in line with the rigid neck. An astonishing amount can be carried in this way with practice,—for half a mile or so, very nearly one's own weight. Getting up and down with such a load is a work of art, which spoils the temper and wrenches the muscles of the beginner. Having got into the strap he finds himself pinned to the ground in spite of his backbone-breaking efforts to rise, so he must learn to so sit down in the beginning that he can tilt the load forward on his back, get on his hands and knees and then elevate himself to the necessary standing-stooping posture; or he must lie down flat and roll over on his face, getting his load fairly between his shoulders, and then work himself up to his hands and knees as before. Sometimes, if the load is heavy, the help of another must be had to get an upright position, and then the packer goes trudging off, red and sweating and with bulging veins.

By the time we had carried our outfits over the portage, we were ready for supper, and after that for a sleep. We pitched no tent—we were too tired, and the blue sky and the still shining sun looked very friendly—so we rolled in our blankets and slumbered.

There were other craft than ours at Lake Bennett,—belonging to parties who had come over before us, and who had not yet started. The most astonishing thing was a small portable sawmill, which had been pulled across the Chilkoot Pass in the winter, over the snow and ice; and the limited means of communication in this country are well shown by the fact that no news of any such mill was to be had anywhere along the route. Men went over the Chilkoot Pass into the interior, but rarely any came back that way.

Among the gold hunters was a solitary Dutchman, a pathetic, desperate, mild-mannered sort of an adventurer, who had built himself a boat like a woodbox in model and construction, square, lop-sided, and leaky; but he started bravely down Lake Bennett, paddling, with a rag of a square-sail braced against a pole. We pitied, admired, and laughed at him, but many were the doubts expressed as to whether he could reach the diggings in his cockle-shell. Then there was a large scow, also frailly built; this contained several tons of outfit, and a party of seven or eight men and one woman. They were the parasites of the mining camp, all ready, with smuggled whisky and faro games—Wein, Weib, und Gesang—to relieve the miners of some of their gold-dust: and I am told that the manager of the expedition brought out $100,000 two years later.

We all got away, one after the other. There was a stiff fair wind blowing down the lake, which soon increased to a gale, and the waves became very rough. The lake is narrow and fjord-like, walled in by high mountains which often rise directly from the shores. Lakes like this all through Alaska are naturally subject to frequent and violent gales, since the deep mountain valleys form a kind of chimney, up and down which the currents of air rush to the frosty snowy mountains from the warmer lowlands, or in the opposite direction. The further we went the harder the wind blew, and the rougher became the water, so that when about half-way down we made a landing to escape a heavy squall. After dinner, it seemed from our snug little cove that the wind had abated, and we put out again. On getting well away from the sheltering shore we found it rougher than ever; but while we were at dinner we had seen the scow go past, its square bow nearly buried in foaming water, and had seen it apparently run ashore on the opposite side of the lake, some miles further down. Once out, therefore, we steered for the place where the scow had been beached, for the purpose of giving aid if any were necessary. On the run over we shipped water repeatedly over both bow and stern, and sometimes were in imminent danger of swamping, but by skillful managing we gained the shelter of a little nook about half a mile from the open beach where the scow was lying, and landed. We then walked along the shore to the scow, and found its passengers all right, they having beached voluntarily, on account of the roughness of the water.

However, we had had enough navigation for one day, so we did not venture out again. Presently another little boat came scudding down the lake through the white, frothy water, and shot in alongside the Skookum. It was a party of miners—the young Irishman whom I had overtaken on the trail to Sheep Camp, and his three "pardners."

It was not an ideal spot where we all camped, being simply a steep rocky slope at the foot of cliffs. When the time came to sleep we had difficulty in finding places smooth enough to lie down comfortably, but finally all were scattered around here and there in various places of concealment among the rocks. I had cleared a space close under a big boulder, of exactly my length and breadth (which does not imply any great labor), and with my head muffled in the blankets, was beginning to doze, when I heard stealthy footsteps creeping toward me. As I lay, these sounds were muffled and magnified in the marvellous quiet of the Alaskan night (although the sun was still shining), so that I could not judge of the size and the distance of the animal. Soon it got quite close to me, and I could hear it scratching at something; then it seemed to be investigating my matches, knife and compass. Finally, wide-awake, and somewhat startled, I sat up suddenly and threw my blanket from my face, and looked for the marauding animal. I found him—in the shape of a saucy little grey mouse, that stared at me in amazement for a moment, and then scampered into his hole under the boulder. As I had no desire to have the impudent little fellow lunching on me while I slept, I plugged the hole with stones before I lay down again. Some of the same animals came to visit Schrader in his bedchamber, and nibbled his ears so that they were sore for some time.*

As the gale continued all the next day without abatement, we profited by the enforced delay to climb the high mountain which rose precipitously above us. And apropos of this climb, it is remarkable what difference one finds in the appearance of a bit of country when simply surveyed from a single point and when actually travelled over. Especially is this true in mountains. Broad slopes which appear to be perfectly easy to traverse are in reality cut up by narrow and deep canyons, almost impossible to cross; what seems to be a trifling bench of rock, half a mile up the mountain, grows into a perpendicular cliff a hundred feet high before one reaches it; and pretty grey streaks become gulches filled with great angular rock fragments, so loosely laid one over the other that at each careful step one is in fear of starting a mighty avalanche, and of being buried under rock enough to build a city.

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* A portion of this description is similar to that used by the writer in an article published in "Outing."

Owing to difficulties like these it was near supper-time when we gained the top of the main mountain range. As far as the eye could see in all directions, there rose a wilderness of barren peaks, covered with snow; while in one direction lay a desolate, lifeless table-land, shut in by high mountains. Below and near us lay gulches and canyons of magnificent depth, and the blue waters of one of the arms of Lake Bennett appeared, just lately free from ice. Above, rose a still higher peak, steep, difficult of access, and covered with snow; this the lateness of the hour prevented us from attempting to climb.

Next day and the next the wind was as high as ever; but the waiting finally became too tedious, and we started out, the four miners having preceded us by a half an hour. Once out of the shelter of the projecting point, we found the gale very strong and the chop disagreeable. We squared off and ran before the wind for the opposite side of the lake, driving ahead at a good rate under our little rag of a sail. Although the boat was balanced as evenly as possible, every minute or two we would take in water, sometimes over the bow, sometimes in the stern, sometimes amidships. I have in my mind a very vivid picture of that scene: Wiborg in the stern, steering intently and carefully; Goodrich and Schrader forward, sheets in hand, attending to the sail; and myself stretched flat on my face, in order not to make the boat top-heavy, and bailing out the water with a frying-pan. On nearing the lower shore we noticed that the boat containing the miners had run into the breakers, and presently one of the men came running along the beach, signaling to us. Fearing that they were in trouble, we made shift to land, although it was no easy matter on this exposed shore; and we then learned that they had kept too near the beach, had drifted into the breakers and had been swamped, but had all safely landed. Three of our party went to give assistance in hauling their boat out of the water, while I remained behind to fry the bacon for dinner.

After dinner we concluded to wait again before attempting the next stage; so we picked out soft places in the sand and slumbered. When we awoke we found the lake perfectly smooth and calm, and lost no time in getting under way. On this day we depended for our motive power solely on our oars, and we found the results so satisfactory that we kept up the practice hundreds of miles.

Below Lake Bennett came Tagish Lake, beautiful and calm. Its largest fjord-like arm is famous for its heavy gales, whence it has been given the name of "Windy Arm"; but as we passed it we could hardly distinguish the line of division between the mountains in the air and those reflected in the lake, so completely at rest was the water. At the lower part, where we camped, we found the first inhabitants since leaving the coast, natives belonging to the Tagish tribe. They are a handful of wretched, half-starved creatures, who scatter in the summer season for hunting and fishing, but always return to this place, where they have constructed rude wooden habitations for winter use. We bought here a large pike, which formed an agreeable change from bacons, beans, and slapjacks.

While camped at this place we met an old man and his two sons, who had brought horses into the country some months before, with some crazy idea of taking up land for farming purposes, or of getting gold. The old man had been taken sick, and all three were now on their way out, having abandoned their horses on the Hootalinqua. All three were thin and worn, and agreed if they ever got out of the country they would not come back. The old man begged for a little tea, which we supplied him, together with a few other things ; he insisted on our taking pay for them, with the pathetic pride of a man broken in health and fortune, but we understood the pioneer custom well enough to know we should give no offence by refusing.

After passing out of this lake we entered another, appropriately called by the miners "Mud Lake"; it is very shallow, with muddy bottom and shores. Here we found camping disagreeable, for on account of the shallowness we could not bring our heavily laden boat quite to the shore, but were obliged to wade knee deep in soft mud for a rod or two before finding even moderately solid ground.

About this time we experienced the first sharp taste of the terrible Alaskan mosquito—or it might be more correct to reverse the statement, and say that the mosquitoes had their first taste of us. At the lower end of Tagish Lake they suddenly attacked us in swarms, and remained with us steadily until near the time of our departure from the Territory. We had heard several times of the various hardships to be encountered in Alaska, but, as is often the case, we found that these accounts had left a rather unduly magnified image of the difficulties in our imaginations, as compared with our actual experiences. In this generalization the mosquito must be excepted. I do not think that any description or adjective can exaggerate the discomfort and even torture produced by these pests, at their worst, for they stand peerless among their kind, so far as my experience goes, and that of others with whom I have spoken, for wickedness unalloyed.

We were driven nearly frantic when they attacked us and quickly donned veils of netting, fastened around the hat and buttoned into the shirt, and gauntleted cavalry gloves; but still the heat of rowing and the warmth of the sun made the stings smart till we could hardly bear it. From time to time I glanced at Pete, who sat in the stern, steering with a paddle, his face and hands unprotected, his hat pushed back, trolling his favorite song.

"And none was left to tell me, Tom,
  And few was left to know
Who played upon the village green,
  Just twenty year ago!"

I admired him beyond expression. "How long," thought I, "does one have to stay in Alaska before one gets so indifferent to mosquitoes as this? Or is it simply the phlegm of the Norwegian—magnificent in mosquito time?" Just then Pete broke in his song and began a refrain of curses in Norwegian and English and some other languages—all apropos of mosquitoes. He averred emphatically that never—no, never—had he seen mosquitoes quite so disagreeable. This lasted about five minutes; then he settled down to a calm again. I perceived that men's tempers may be something like geysers—some keep bubbling hot water continually, while others, like Pete's, keep quiet for a while and then explode violently.

It seems strange to many that a country like Alaska, sub-Arctic in climate, should be so burdened with a pest which we generally associate with hot weather and tropical swamps. But the long warm days of summer in these high latitudes seem to be extraordinarily favorable to all kinds of insect life—mosquitoes, gnats, and flies—which harbor in the moss and dense underbrush. Other countries similarly situated, such as the region between the Gulf of Bothnia and the Arctic Ocean—Northern Finland—which is north of the Arctic Circle, are also pestered with mosquitoes during the summer months.

In Alaska the mosquitoes are so numerous that they occupy a large part of men's attention, and form the subject for much conversation as long as they remain—and they are astonishing stayers, appearing before the snow is gone and not leaving until the nights grow comparatively long and frosty. They flourish as well in cool weather as in hot, thawing cheerfully out after a heavy frost and getting to work as if to make up for lost time. We were able to distinguish at least three species: a large one like those met at the seaside resorts, which buzzes and buzzes and buzzes; then a smaller one that buzzes a little but also bites ferociously; and, worst of all, little striped fellows who go about in great crowds. These last never stop to buzz, but come straight for the intruder on a bee-line, stinging him almost before they reach him—and their sting is particularly irritating. Many stories have been told of the mosquitoes in Alaska; one traveller tells how bears are sometimes killed by these pests, though this story is probably an exaggeration. But men who are travelling must have veils and gloves as protection against them. Even the natives wrap their heads in skins or cloth, and are overjoyed at any little piece of mosquito-netting they can get hold of. With the best protection, however, one cannot help being tormented and worn out.

We always slept with gloves and veils on, and with our heads wrapped as tightly as possible, yet the insects would crawl through the crevices of the blankets and sting through the clothes, or where the veil pressed against the face,—not one, but hundreds—so that one slept but fitfully and woke to find his face bloody and smarting, and would at once make for the cold river water, bathing hands and face to relieve the pain, and dreading to keep his veil up long enough to gobble his breakfast.

The climate of this interior country is dry, and the rains infrequent. We worked so long during the day that we seldom took the trouble to pitch a tent at night, but lay down with our backs against some convenient log, so that the mosquitoes had a good chance at us. Even in the day, when protected by veil and gloves, I have been so irritated by them as to run until breathless to relieve my excitement, and I can readily believe, as has been told, that a man lost in the underbrush without protection, would very soon lose his reason and his life. As soon as the country is cleared up or burned over, the scourge becomes much less, so that in the mining camps the annoyance is comparatively slight. Mosquitoes are popularly supposed to seek and feed upon men, while the reverse is true. They avoid men, swarming most in thick underbrush and swamps which are difficult of access, and disappearing almost entirely as soon as the axe and the plow and other implements in the hands of man invade their solitudes.

Out of Mud Lake we floated into the river again, and slipped easily down between the sandbanks. Ducks and geese were plentiful along here, and we practised incessantly on them with the rifle, without, however, doing any noticeable execution. On the second day we knew we must be near the famous canyon of the Lewes; and one of our party was put on watch, in order that we might know its whereabouts before the swift current should sweep us into it, all heavily laden as we were. The rest of us rowed and steered, and admired the beautiful tints of the hills, which now receded from the river, now came close to it. Presently we heard a gentle snore from the lookout who was comfortably settled among the flour sacks in the bow; this proved to us that our confidence had been misplaced, and all hands became immediately alert. Soon after, we noticed a bit of red flannel fluttering from a tree projecting over the bank, doubtless a part of some traveller's shirt sacrificed in the cause of humanity; and by the time we had pulled in to the shore we could see the waters of the river go swirling and roaring into a sudden narrow canyon with high, perpendicular walls.

We found the parties of miners already landed, and presently, as we waited on the bank and reconnoitered, Danlon's party came up, and not long after, the barge, so that we were about twenty in all. Wiborg, and Danlon's guide, Cooper, were the only ones that had had experience in this matter, so all depended on their judgment, and waited to see the results of their efforts before risking anything themselves.

In former years all travellers made a portage around this very difficult place, hauling their boats over the hill with a rude sort of a windlass; but a man having been accidentally sucked into the canyon came out of the other end all right, which emboldened others. In this case Wiborg and Cooper decided that the canyon could be run, although the water was very high and turbulent; and they thought best to run the boats through themselves. Our own boat was selected to be experimented with; most of the articles that were easily damageable by water were taken out, leaving perhaps about eight hundred pounds. I went as passenger sitting in the bow, while the two old frontiersmen managed paddles and oars. Rowing out from the shore we were immediately sucked into the gorge, and went dashing through at a rate which I thought could not be less than twenty miles an hour. So great is the body of water confined between these perpendicular walls, and so swift is the stream, that its surface becomes convex, being considerably higher in the centre of the channel than on the sides. Waves rushing in every direction are also generated, forming a puzzling chop. Two or three of these waves presently boarded us, so that I was thoroughly wet, and then came a broad glare of sunlight as we emerged from the first half of the canyon into a sort of cauldron which lies about in its centre.

Here we were twisted about by eddying currents for a few seconds, and then precipitated half sidewise into the canyon again. The latter half turned out to be the rougher part, and our bow dipped repeatedly into the waves, till I found myself sitting in water, and the bow, where most of the water remained, sagged alarmingly. It seemed as if another ducking would sink us. This fortunately we did not get, but steered safely through the final swirl to smooth water. During all this trip I had not looked up once, although as we shot by we heard faintly a cheer from the rocks above, where our companions were.

Next day, after a night made almost unbearable by mosquitoes, we rose to face the difficulties of White Horse Rapids, which lie below the canyon proper, and are still more formidable. Here the river contracts again, and is confined between perpendicular walls of basalt. The channel is full of projecting rocks, so that the whole surface is broken, and there are many strong conflicting currents and eddies. At the end of these rapids, which extend for a quarter of a mile or so, is a narrow gorge in the rocks, through which the whole volume of water is forced. This is said to be only twenty or thirty feet wide, although at the time of our passing the water was sufficiently high to flow over the top of the enclosing walls, thus concealing the actual width of the chute. Through this the water plunges at a tremendous velocity—probably thirty miles an hour—forming roaring, foaming, tossing, lashing waves which somehow make the name White Horse seem appropriate.

Above the beginning of the rapid we unloaded our boat, and carefully lowered it down by ropes, keeping it close to the shore, and out of the resistless main current. After having safely landed it, with considerable trouble, below the chute, we carried our outfit (about twelve hundred pounds) to the same point. Danlon's boat and that belonging to the miners were safely gotten through in the same way, all hands helping in turn.

When it came to the scow, it was the general opinion that it would be impossible to lower it safely, for its square shape gave the current such a grip that it seemed as if no available strength of rope or man could hold out against it. As carrying the boat was out of the question, the only alternative was to boldly run it through the rapids, in the middle of the channel; and this naturally hazardous undertaking was rendered more difficult by the frail construction of the scow, which had been built of thin lumber by unskilled hands. The scow's crew did not care to make the venture themselves, but finally prevailed upon Wiborg and Cooper to make the trial.

Reflecting that at any time I might be placed in similar difficulties, in this unknown country, and thrown upon my own resources, I resolved to accompany them, for the sake of finding out how the thing was done; but I was ruled out of active service by Wiborg, who, however, consented finally to my going along as passenger. Two of the scow's own crew were drafted to act as oarsmen, and we pushed out, Cooper steering, and Wiborg in the bow, iron-shod pole in hand, fending off from threatening rocks; and in a second we were dancing down the boiling rapids and tossing hither and thither like a cork. I sat facing the bow, opposite the oarsmen, who tugged frantically away, white as death; behind me Cooper's paddle flashed and twisted rapidly, as we dodged by rocks projecting from the water, sometimes escaping only by a few inches, where a collision would have smashed us to chips. The rest of the party, waiting below the chute, said that sometimes they saw only the bottow of the scow, and sometimes looked down upon it as if from above. As we neared the end, Cooper's skillful paddle drove us straight for the centre, where the water formed an actual fall; this central part was the most turbulent, but the safest, for on either side, a few feet away, there was danger of grazing the shallow underlying

SHOOTING THE WHITE HORSE RAPIDS.

rocks. As we trembled on the brink, I looked up and saw our friends standing close by, looking much concerned. A moment later there was a dizzying plunge, a blinding shower of water, a sudden dashing, too swift for observation, past rock walls, and then Wiborg let out an exultant yell—we were safe. At that instant one of the oarsmen snapped his oar, an accident which would have been serious a moment before. On the shore below the rapids we found flour-sacks, valises, boxes and splintered boards, mementoes of poor fellows less lucky than ourselves.

We camped at the mouth of the Tahkeena River that night, and arrived the next day at Lake Labarge, the last and longest of the series. When we reached it, at one o'clock, the water was calm and smooth; and although it was nearly forty miles across, we decided to keep on without stopping till we reached the other side, for fear of strong winds such as had delayed us on Lake Bennett. Danlon's party concluded to do the same, and so we rowed steadily all night, after having rowed all day.

About two o'clock in the morning a favorable wind sprung up suddenly, and increased to a gale. At this time we became separated from the other boats, which kept somewhat close to the shore, while we, with our tiny sail, stood straight across the lake for the outlet. As soon as we stopped rowing I could not help falling asleep, although much against my will, for our position was neither comfortable nor secure; and thus I dozed and woke half a dozen times before landing. On reaching the shore we found difficulty in sleeping on account of the swarms of hungry mosquitoes, so we soon loaded up again.

We had got caribou meat from some people whom we passed half-way down Lake Labarge; and the next day we saw a moose on an island, but the current swept us by before we could get a shot at him. Large game, on the whole, however, was very scarce along this route. The weather was warm and pleasant after leaving Lake Labarge, and there were no serious obstructions. The swift current bombarded the bottom of the boat with grains of sand, making a sound like a continual frying. "Look out!" Pete would say. "The devil is frying his fat for us!" We travelled easily sixty or eighty miles a day, floating with the current and rowing.

Danlon's party, which we had lost sight of on Lake Labarge, reached us a couple of days afterwards, having pulled night and day to catch up. They were grey and speckled with fatigue and told us of having decided to leave one boat (they came with only one of the two they had started in) at Lake Labarge, and also of leaving some of their provisions. They had unfortunately forgotten to keep any sugar—could we lend them some? We produced the sugar and smiled knowingly; a few days later we ran across the solitary Dutchman, who had engineered his wood-box thus far, and he told us the whole story: how when the boats got near the shore one was swamped in shallow water, losing most of its cargo, and how the occupants had to stand in cold water the rest of the night, finally getting to shore and to rights again. The priest had been naming the camps after the letters of the Greek alphabet, and the night on Labarge should have been Camp Rho; and this was appropriate as we rowed nearly all night.

From here the journey was comparatively easy. The skies were always clear and blue, and the stream had by this time increased to a lordly river, growing larger by continual accessions of new tributaries. It is dotted with many small islands, which are covered with a dense growth of evergreen trees. On the side of the valley are often long smooth terraces, perfectly carved and smoothly grassed, so as to present an almost artificial aspect. From this sort of a country are sudden changes to a more bold and picturesque type, so at one time the river flows swiftly through high gates of purple rock rising steeply for hundreds of feet, and in a few moments more emerges into a wide low valley. The cliffs are sometimes carved into buttresses or pinnacles, which overlook the walls, and appear to form part of a gigantic and impregnable castle, on the top of which the dead spruces stand out against the sky like spires and flagstaves. Usually on one side or the other of the river is low fertile land, where grows a profusion of shrubs and flowers.

In the mellow twilight, which lasts for two or three hours in the middle of the night, one can see nearly as far and as distinctly as by day, but everything takes on an unreal air. This is something like a beautiful sunset effect further south, but is evenly distributed over all the landscape. At about ten o'clock the coloring becomes exquisite, when the half-light brings out the violets, the purples, and various shades of yellow and brown in the rocks, in contrast to the green of the vegetation.

TALKING IT OVER.

We had some difficulty in finding suitable camping-places in this country. One night I remember, we ran fifteen miles after our usual camping-hour, with cliffs on one side of the river and low thickets on the other. Three times we landed on small islands, in a tangle of vines and roses; and as many times we were driven off by the innumerable mosquitoes. At last we found a strip of shore about ten feet wide, between the water and the thickets, sloping at a considerable angle; and there we made shift to spend the night.

There are two places below the White Horse Rapids where the channel is so narrowed or shallowed that rapids are formed. At the first of these, called the "Five Finger Rapids," the river is partially blocked by high islets, which cut up the stream in several portions, Although the currents in each of these "fingers" is rapid, and the water rough, yet we found no difficulty in running through without removing any part of the load, although one of the boats shipped a little water. When we arrived at the second place, which is called the "Rink Rapids," and is not far below the Five Fingers, we were relieved to find that owing to the fullness of the river, the rough water, which in this case is caused by the shallowing of the stream, was smoothed down, and we went through, close to the shore, with no more trouble than if we had been floating down a lake.

During the whole trip the country through which we passed was singularly lonely and uninhabited. After leaving the few huts on Tagish Lake, which I have mentioned, we saw a few Indians in a summer camp on Lake Labarge; and this was all until we got to the junction of the Lewes and Pelly Rivers, over three hundred miles from Tagish Lake. At Pelly we found a log trading-post, with a single white man in charge, and a few Indians. There were also three miners, who had met with misfortune, and were disconsolate enough. They had started up Pelly River with a two years' outfit, intending to remain and prospect for that period, but at some rapid water their boat had been swamped and all their provisions lost. They had managed to burn off logs enough to build a raft, and in that way had floated down the river to the post, living in the meantime on some flour which they had been lucky enough to pick up after the wreck.

Although there are very few people in the country, one is continually surprised at first by perceiving solitary white tents standing on some prominent point or cliff which overlooks the river. At first this looks very cheerful, and we sent many a hearty hail across the river to such places; but our calls were never answered, for these are not the habitations of the living but of the dead. Inside of each of these tents, which are ordinarily made of white cloth, though sometimes of woven matting, is a dead Indian, and near him is laid his rifle, snowshoes, ornaments and other personal effects. I do not think the custom of leaving these articles at the grave implies any belief that they will be used by the dead man in another world, but simply signifies that he will have no more use for the things which were so dear to him in life—just as among ourselves, articles which have been used by dear friends are henceforth laid aside and no longer used. These dwellings of the dead are always put in prominent positions, commanding as broad and fair a view as can be obtained. At Pelly we saw several Indian graves that were surrounded by hewn palings, rudely and fantastically painted.

When we reached the White River we found it nearly as broad as the Yukon. The waters of the two rivers are separated by a distinct line at their confluence and for some distance further down, the Yukon water being dark and the other milky, whence the name—White River. All over this country is a thin deposit of white dust-like volcanic ash, covering the surface, but on White River this ash is very thick, and the river flowing through it carries away enough to give the waters continually a milky appearance. As we approached White River we beheld what seemed a most extraordinary cloud hanging over its valley. It was a solid compact mass of white, like some great ice-flower rising from the hills, reminding one as one explored it through field-glasses, in its snowy vastness and unevenness, of some great glacier. The clouds were in rounded bunches and each bunch was crenulated. Below was a mass of smoke with a ruddy reflection as if from some great fire, and smaller snowy compact clouds came up at intervals, as if gulped out from some crater. This we thought might be the fabled volcano of the White River, but on getting nearer it seemed to be probably a forest-fire. Although there are no railway trains to set fires with their sparks, nowhere do fires start more easily than in Alaska, for the ground is generally covered deep with a peat-like dry moss, which ignites when one lights a fire above and smoulders so persistently that it can hardly be extinguished, creeping along under the roots of the living moss and breaking out into flame on opportunity.

The Fourth of July was celebrated by shooting at a mark; and that night we had a true blessing, for we camped on a little bare sandspit on an island, where the wind was brisk and kept the mosquitoes away. These insects cannot stand against a breeze, but are whisked away by it like the imps of darkness at the first breath of God's morning light, as we have read in fairy stories. The freedom was delicious, so we just stretched ourselves in the sand, and slept ten hours. We were awakened by a violent plunge in the water and stuck our heads out of the blankets in a hurry, thinking it was a moose; but it turned out to be only one of our party celebrating the day after the Fourth by a bath.

At Sixty Mile we found an Indian trading-post, located on an island in the river, and kept by Jo La Du, a lonely trader who a year afterwards became rich and famous from his participation in the Klondike rush. He had no idea of this when we saw him, but shook hands with us shyly and silently, a man whom years had made more accustomed to the Indian than to the white man.

The name Sixty Mile is applied to a small river here, which is sixty miles from old Fort Reliance, an ancient trading post belonging to the Hudson Bay Company. The hardy and intrepid agents of the company were the first white men to explore the interior of Alaska. The lower Yukon in the vicinity of the delta was explored by the Russians in 1835 to 1838, and the river was called by the Eskimo name of Kwikpuk or Kwikpak,—the great river: in 1842-3 the Russian Lieutenant Zagoskin explored as far as the Nowikakat. But the upper Yukon was first explored by members of the Hudson Bay Company. In 1846 a trader named Bell crossed from the Mackenzie to the Porcupine, and so down to the Yukon, to which he first applied the name by which it is now known: it is an Indian, not Eskimo, word. Previous to this, in 1840, Robert Campbell, of the Hudson Bay Company, crossed from the Stikeen to the Pelly and so down to its junction with the Lewes or upper Yukon. At the point of the junction Campbell built

Fort Selkirk, which was afterwards pillaged and burned by the Indians, and remained deserted till Harper built the present post, close to the site of the old one. Forty miles below old Fort Reliance is Forty Mile Creek, so that the mouths of Forty Mile and Sixty Mile are a hundred miles apart. The river by this time is a mile wide in places, and filled with low wooded islands: its water is muddy and the eddying currents give the appearance of boiling.

We found no one on the site of old Fort Reliance, and we used the fragments of the old buildings lying around in the grass for fire-wood. It was practically broad daylight all night, for although the sun went down behind the hills for an hour or two, yet it was never darker than a cloudy day.

The day of leaving Fort Reliance we came to the junction of the Klondike or Thronduc River with the Yukon, and found here a village of probably two hundred Indians, but no white men. The Indians were living in log cabins: on the shore numbers of narrow and shallow birch canoes were drawn up, very graceful and delicate in shape, and marvellously light, weighing only about thirty pounds, but very difficult for any one but an Indian to manœuvre. Yet the natives spear salmon from these boats. At the time we were there most of the male Indians were stationed along the river, eagerly watching for the first salmon to leap out of the water, for about this time of the year the immigration of these fish begins, and they swim up the rivers from the sea thousands of miles, to place their spawn in some quiet creek. On account of the large number of salmon who turn aside to enter the stream here, the Indians called it Thron-duc or *fish-water*; this is now corrupted by the miners into Klondike, the Indian village is replaced by the frontier city of Dawson, and the fame of the Klondike is throughout the world.

The trip of forty miles from Fort Reliance to Forty Mile Post was made in the morning, and was enlivened by an exciting race between our boat and that belonging to Danlon. We had kept pretty closely together on all our trip, passing and repassing one another, but our boat was generally ahead; and when we both encamped at Fort Reliance, the other party resolved to outwit us. So they got up early in the morning and slipped

ALASKA HUMPBACKED SALMON, MALE AND FEMALE.

away before we were well awake. When we discovered that they were gone, we got off after them as quickly as possible, but as the current flows about seven miles an hour, and they were rowing hard besides, they were long out of sight of us. However, we buckled down to hard rowing, each pulling a single oar only, and relieving one another at intervals, tugging away as desperately as if something important depended on it. When we were already in sight of Forty Mile Post we spied our opponents' boat about a mile ahead of us, and we soon overhauled them, for they had already spent themselves by hard rowing. Then Pete knew a little channel which led up to the very centre of the camp, while the others took the more roundabout way, so that we arrived and were quite settled—we assumed a very negligent air, as if we had been there all day—when the others arrived. We called this the great Anglo-American boat race and crowed not a little over the finish.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FORTY MILE DIGGINGS.

FORTY MILE CREEK is the oldest mining camp in the Yukon country, and the first where coarse gold or "gulch diggings" was found. In the fall of 1886 a prospector by the name of Franklin discovered the precious metal near the mouth of what is now called Forty Mile Creek. This stream was put down on the old maps as the Shitando River, but miners are very independent in their nomenclature, and often adopt a new name if the old one does not suit them, preferring a simple term with an evident meaning to the more euphonious ones suggestive of Pullman cars. At the time of the discovery of gold there was a post of the Alaskan Commercial Company at the mouth of the stream, but the trader in charge, Jack McQuesten, was absent in San Francisco. As the supplies at the post were very low, and a rush of miners to the district was anticipated for the next summer, it was thought best to try to get word to the trader, and George Williams undertook to carry out a letter in midwinter.

Accompanied by an Indian, he succeeded in attaining the Chilkoot Pass, but was there frozen to death. The letter, however, was carried to the post at Dyea by the Indian, and the necessary supplies were sent, thus averting the threatened famine. From 1887 to 1893 the various gulches of Forty Mile Creek were the greatest gold producers of the Yukon country, but by 1893 the supplies of gold began to show exhaustion; and about this time a Russian half-breed, by the name of Pitka, discovered gold in the bars of Birch Creek, some two hundred miles further down the Yukon.

A large part of the population of the Forty Mile district rushed to the new diggings and built the mining camp to which they gave the name of Circle City, from its proximity to the Arctic Circle. The Forty Mile district is partly in British and partly in American territory, since the boundary line crosses the stream some distance above its mouth, while Birch Creek is entirely in American territory. The world-renowned Klondike, again, is within British boundaries. So the tide of mining population has ebbed back and forth in the Yukon country, each wave growing larger than the first, till it culminated in the third of the great world-rushes after gold, exciting, wild and romantic—the Klondike boom, a fit successor to the "forty-nine" days of California, and to the events which followed the discovery of gold in Australia.

At the time of our visit, in 1896, Forty Mile Post was distinctly on the decline. Yet it contained probably 500 or 600 inhabitants, not counting the Indians, of whom there were a considerable number. These Indians were called Charley Indians, from their chief Charley. There is a mission near here and the Indians have all been Christianized. It is told that the Tanana Indians, who had no mission, and who came here out of their wild fastnesses only once in a while to trade, did not embrace Christianity, which rather elated Charley's followers, as they considered that they now had decidedly the advantage; and they openly vaunted of it. In this country at certain times of the year, particularly in the fall, great herds of caribou pass, and then one can slaughter as many as he needs for the winter's supply of meat, without much hunting, for the animals select some trail and are not easily scared from it. One fall a herd marched up one of the busiest mining gulches of Birch Creek and the miners stood in their cabin doors and shot them.

So the Indians always watch as eagerly for the caribou, as they do for the salmon in the summer. But this particular fall it happened that the animals stayed away from the Charley Indians' hunting grounds, but passed through those of the Tananas in force. The heathen then came down to the trading post laden with meat, and the chief, who knew a little English, taunted Charley in it.

"Where moose, Charley?" he asked.

"No moose," said Charley.

"Woo!" said the Tanana chief, grinning in triumph. "What's the matter with your Jesus?"

The Indians at Forty Mile Post were mostly encamped in tents or were living in rude huts of timber plastered with mud; while the white men had built houses of logs, unsquared, with the chinks filled with mud and moss and the roof covered with similar material. Prices were high throughout: A lot of land in the middle of the town, say 100 by 150 feet, was worth $7,000 or $8,000; sugar was worth twenty-five cents a pound and ordinary labor ten dollars a day. All provisions were also very expensive, and the supply was often short. Many common articles, usually reckoned among what the foolish call the necessities of life, could not be obtained by us. I say foolish, because one can learn from pioneering and exploring, upon how little life can be supported and health and strength maintained, and how many of the supposed necessities are really luxuries.

The Alaskan Eskimo lives practically on fish alone throughout the year, without salt, without bread,—just fish—and grows fat and oily and of pungent odor. But white men can hardly become so simple in their diet without some danger of dying in the course of the experiment, like the famous cow that was trained to go without eating, but whose untimely death cut short her career in the first bloom of success.

The miners have always been dependent for supplies on steamers from San Francisco or

Seattle, which have to make a trip of 4,000 miles or more; and, in the early days, if any accident occurred, there was no other source.

I have heard of a bishop of the Episcopal Church, a missionary in this country, who lived all winter upon moose meat, without salt; and an old miner told me of working all summer on flour alone. When the fa'l came he shot some caribou, and his description of his sensations on eating his first venison steak were touching. Hardly a winter has passed until very recently when the miners were not put on rations—so many pounds of bacon and so much flour to the man,—to bridge over the time until the steamer should arrive. The winter of 1889–90 is known to the old Yukon pioneer as the "starvation winter," for during the previous summer a succession of accidents prevented the river boat from reaching Forty Mile with provisions. The men were finally starved out and in October they all began attempting to make their way down the Yukon, towards St. Michaels, over a thousand miles away, where food was known to be stored, having been landed at this depot from ocean steamers. Nearly a hundred men left the post in small boats. Some travelled the whole distance to St. Michaels, others stopped and wintered by the way at the various miserable trading posts, or in the winter camps of the Indians themselves, wherever food could be found. It happened that this year the river did not freeze up so early as usual, which favored the flight, though the journey down the lower part of the river was made in running ice.

In connection with the shortness of provisions and supplies in these early years, a story is told of a worthless vagabond who used to hang around Forty Mile Post, and whose hoaxes, invented to make money, put the wooden nutmeg and the oak ham of Connecticut to shame. There was a dearth of candles one year at the post, and in midwinter, when, for a while, the sun hardly rises at all, that was no trifling privation. The weather was cold, as it always is at Forty Mile in the winter time. The trickster had some candle molds in his possession, but no grease; so he put the wicks into the molds, which he filled with water colored white with chalk or condensed milk. The water immediately froze solid, making a very close imitation of a candle. He manufactured a large number and then started around the post to peddle them. All bought eagerly—Indian squaws to sew by, miners, shop-keepers, everybody. One man bought a whole case and shoved them under his bed; when he came to pull them out again to use, he found nothing but the wicks in a pile, the ice having melted and the water having evaporated in the warm room. What punishment was meted out to this unique swindler I do not know, but I could not learn that he was ever severely dealt with.

The evening of our arrival in Forty Mile Post we were attracted by observing a row of miners, who were lined up in front of the saloon engaged in watching the door of a large log cabin opposite, rather dilapidated, with the windows broken in. On being questioned, they said there was going to be a dance, but when or how they did not seem to know: all seemed to take only a languid looker-on interest, speaking of the affair lightly and flippantly. Presently more men, however, joined the group and eyed the cabin expectantly. In spite of their disclaimers they evidently expected to take part, but where were the fair partners for the mazy waltz?

The evening wore on until ten o'clock, when in the dusk a stolid Indian woman, with a baby in the blanket on her back, came cautiously around the corner, and with the peculiar long slouchy step of her kind, made for the cabin door, looking neither to the right nor to the left. She had no fan, nor yet an opera cloak; she was not even décolleté; she wore large moccasins on her feet—number twelve, I think, according to the white man's system of measurement—and she had a bright colored handkerchief on her head. She was followed by a dozen others, one far behind the other, each silent and unconcerned, and each with a baby upon her back. They sidled into the log cabin and sat down on the benches, where they also deposited their babies in a row: the little red people lay there very still, with wide eyes shut or staring, but never crying—Indian babies know that is all foolishness and doesn't do any good. The mothers sat awhile looking at the ground in some one spot and then slowly lifted their heads to look at the miners who had slouched into the cabin after them—men fresh from the diggings, spoiling for excitement of any kind. Then a man with a dilapidated fiddle struck up a swinging, sawing melody, and in the intoxication of the moment some of the most reckless of the miners grabbed an Indian woman and began furiously swinging her around in a sort of waltz, while the others crowded around and looked on.

Little by little the dusk grew deeper, but candles were scarce and could not be afforded. The figures of the dancing couples grew more and more indistinct and their faces became lost to view, while the sawing of the fiddle grew more and more rapid, and the dancing more excited. There was no noise, however; scarcely a sound save the fiddle and the shuffling of the feet over the floor of rough hewn logs; for the Indian women were stolid as ever, and the miners could not speak the language of their partners. Even the lookers-on said nothing, so that these silent dancing figures in the dusk made an almost weird effect.

One by one, however, the women dropped out, tired, picked up their babies and slouched off home, and the men slipped over to the saloon to have a drink before going to their cabins. Surely this squaw-dance, as they call it, was one of the most peculiar balls ever seen. No sound of revelry by night, no lights, no flowers, no introductions, no conversations. Of all the Muses, Terpsichore the nimble-footed, alone was represented, for surely the nymph who presides over music would have disowned the fiddle.

All the diggings in the Forty Mile district were remote from the Post, and to reach them one had to ascend Forty Mile Creek, a rapid stream, for some distance. Pete left us here, and we three concluded to go it alone. Inasmuch as we were young and tender, we were overwhelmed with advice of such various and contradictory kinds that we were almost disheartened. Every one agreed that it would be impossible to take our boats up the river, that we should take an "up river" boat, (that is, a boat built long and narrow, with a wide overhang, so as to make as little friction with the water as possible, and to make upsetting difficult); but when we came to inquire we found there was no such boat to be had. We were advised to take half-a-dozen experienced polers, but such polers could not be found. Evidently we must either wait the larger part of the summer for our preparations *à la mode*, or go anyhow; and this latter we decided to do. We announced our intention at the table of the man whose hospitality we were enjoying. He stared.

"You'll find Forty Mile Creek a hard river to go up," he said, slowly. "Have you had much experience in ascending rivers?"

"Very little," we replied.

"Are you good polers?" asked another.

"Like the young lady who was asked whether she could play the piano," I answered, "we don't know—we never tried." Everybody roared; they had been wanting to laugh for some time, and here was their opportunity. Later a guide was offered to us, but we had got on our dignity and refused him; then he asked to be allowed to accompany us as a passenger, taking his own food, and helping with the boat, and we consented to this. He had a claim on the headwaters of Sixty Mile, to which he wished to go back, but could not make the journey up the river alone. A year afterwards this penniless fellow was one of the lucky men in the Klondike rush and came back to civilization with a reputed fortune of $100,000.

We could row only a short distance up the creek from the post, for after this the current became so swift that we could make no headway. We then tied a long line to the bow of the boat, and two of us, walking on the shore, pulled the line, while another stood in the bow and by constant shoving out into the stream, succeeded in overcoming the tendency for the pull of the line to make the boat run into the shore or into such shallow water that it would ground. We soon reached the canyon, supposed to be the most difficult place in the creek to pass; here the stream is very rapid and tumbles foaming over huge boulders which have partially choked it. We towed our boat up through this, however, without much difficulty, and on the second night camped at the boundary line.

Here a gaunt old character, Sam Patch by name, had his cabin. He was famous for his patriotism and his vegetables. His garden was on the steep side of a south-facing hill and was sheltered from the continual frosts which fall in the summer nights, so that it succeeded well.

Foreign vegetables, as well as native plants, thrive luxuriantly in Alaska so long as they can be kept from being frost-bitten: for in the long sunshiny summer days they grow twice as fast and big as they do in more temperate climates. "Sam Patch's potato patch" was famous throughout the diggings, and the surest way to win Sam's heart was to go and inspect and admire it. Sam was always an enthusiastic American, and when the Canadian surveyors surveyed the meridian line which constituted the International boundary, they ran it right through his potato patch; but he stood by his American flag and refused to haul it down—quite unnecessarily, because no one asked him to do so.

The next day we reached the mouth of the little tributary called Moose Creek. From here a trail thirty miles in length leads over the low mountains to the headwaters of Sixty Mile Creek, where several of the richest gulches of the Forty Mile district were located. We beached our boat, therefore, put packs on our backs and started. At this time the days were hot and the mosquitoes vicious, and nearly every night was frosty; so we sweat and smarted all day, and shivered by night, for our blankets were hardly thick enough. We used to remark on rising in the morning that Alaska was a delightful country, with temperature to suit every taste; no matter if one liked hot weather or moderate or cold, if he would wait he would get it inside of twenty-four hours.

We were tired when we started over the trail, and the journey was not an easy one, for we carried blankets, food, cameras, and other small necessaries. We camped in a small swamp the first night, where the ground was so wet that we were obliged to curl up on the roots of trees, close to the trunks, to keep out of the water. The second day a forest fire blocked our journey, but we made our way through it, treading swiftly over the burning ground and through the thick smoke: then we emerged onto a bare rocky ridge, from which we could look down, on the right, over the net-work of little valleys which feed Forty Mile Creek, and on the other side over the tributaries of Sixty Mile Creek, clearly defined as if on a map. The ridge on which we travelled was cut up like the teeth of a saw, so that a large part of our time was spent in climbing up and down.

On the latter part of the second day we found no wood, and at night we could hardly prepare food enough to keep our stomachs from sickening. My feet had become raw at the start from hard boots, and every step was a torture; yet the boots could not be taken off, for the trail was covered with small sharp stones, and the packs on our backs pressed heavily downward. The third day we separated, each descending from the mountain ridge into one of the little gulches, in which we could see the white tents or the brown cabins of the miners, with smoke rising here and there. My way led me down a rocky ridge and then abruptly into the valley of Miller Creek. As I sat down and rested, surveying the little valley well dotted with shanties, two men came climbing up the trail and sat down to chat. They were going to the spot on Forty Mile Creek which we had just left—there was a keg of whisky "cached" there and they had been selected a committee of two by the miners to escort the aforesaid booze into camp. They were alternately doleful at the prospect of the sixty mile tramp and jubilant over the promised whisky, for, as they informed us, the camp had been "dry for some time."

Descending into the camp where the men were busily working, I stopped to watch them. Gaunt, muscular, sweating, they stood in their long boots in the wet gravel and shovelled it above their heads into "sluice boxes,"—a series of long wooden troughs in which a continuous current of water was running. The small material was carried out of the lower end of the sluices by the water. Here and there the big stones choked the current and a man with a long shovel was continuously occupied with cleaning the boxes of such accumulations. Everybody was working intensely. The season is short in Alaska and the claim-owner is generally a hustler; and men who are paid ten dollars a day for shovelling must jump to earn their money.

Strangers were rare on Miller Creek in those days, and everybody stopped a minute to look and answer my greetings politely, but there was no staring, and everybody went on with his work without asking any questions. Men are courteous in rough countries, where each one must travel on his merits and fight his own battles, and where social standing or previous condition of servitude count for nothing. I wandered slowly down from claim to claim. They were all working, one below the other, for this was the best part of one of the oldest and richest gulches of the Forty Mile district. One man asked me where I was going to sleep, and on my telling him that I had not thought of it, replied that there were some empty log cabins a little distance below. Further down a tall, dark, mournful man addressed me in broken English, with a Canadian French accent, and put the same question.

"I work on ze night shift to-night," he continued, "so I do not sleep in my bed. You like, you no fin' better, you is very welcome, sair, to sleep in my cabine, in my bed."

I accepted gratefully, for I was very tired; so the Frenchman conducted me to a cabin about six feet square and insisted upon cooking a little supper for me. He was working for day's wages, he answered to my rather blunt questions, but hoped that he would earn enough this summer and the next winter to buy an outfit and enough "grub" to go prospecting for himself, on the Tanana, which had not been explored and where he believed there must be gold; prospectors get very firmly convinced of such things with no real reason.

After supper he darkened the windows for me and went to work. I sought the comfort of a wooden bunk, covering myself with a dirty bed-quilt. It was very ancient and perhaps did not smell sweet, but what did I care? It was Heaven. The darkness was delicious. I had not known real darkness for so long throughout the summer—always sleeping out of doors in the light of the Alaskan night—that I had felt continually strained and uncomfortable for the lack of it, and this darkened cabin came to me like the sweetest of opiates.

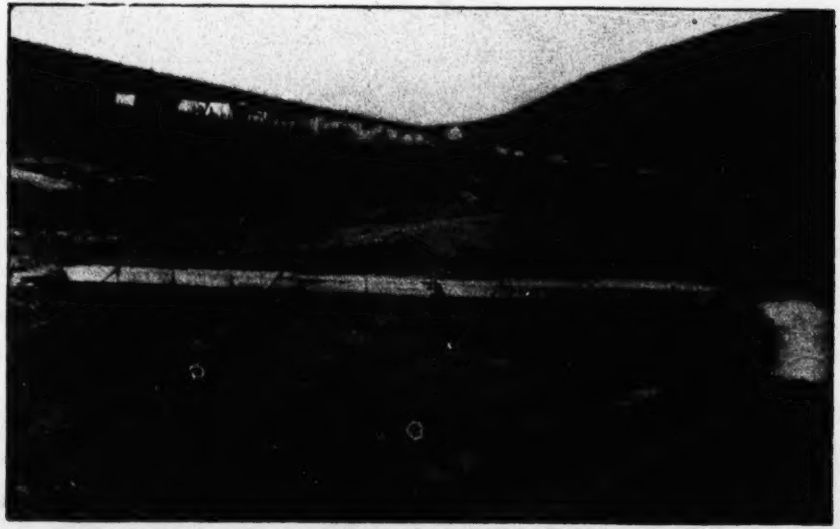
When I awoke the Frenchman was preparing breakfast. I had slept some ten hours without moving. There was only one tin plate, one cup, and one knife and fork, and he insisted upon my eating with them, while he stood by and gravely superintended, urging more slapjacks upon me. I suddenly felt ashamed that I had told him neither my name nor business, for although I had questioned him freely, he had not manifested the slightest curiosity. So without being asked I volunteered some information about myself. He listened attentively and politely, but without any great interest. It was quite apparent that the most important thing to him was that I was a stranger. Soon after breakfast I thanked him warmly and went away—I knew enough of miners not to insult him by offering him money for his hospitality.

The night shift of shovellers had given way to the day shift, and work was going on as fiercely as ever. The bottoms of all these gulches are covered with roughly stratified shingle, most of which slides down from the steep hillsides of the creek. Among the rocks on the hillsides are many quartz veins, which carry "iron pyrite" or "fool's gold"; these often contain small specks of real gold. So when all the rubble gets together and is broken up in the bottom of the stream, where the water flows through it, the different materials in the rocks begin to separate one from another, more or less, according to the difference in their weights and the fineness of the fragments into which they are broken. Now gold is the heaviest of metals, and the result is, that through all this jostling and crowding it gradually works itself down to the bottom of the heap, and generally quite to the solid rock below. This has been found to be the case nearly everywhere. In process of time the gravel accumulations become quite thick; in Miller Creek, for example, they varied from three or four feet at the head of the valley, where I was, to fifty or sixty at the mouth. But all the upper gravels are barren and valueless. Where the gravels are not deep, they are simply shovelled off and out of the way, till the lower part, where the gold lies, is laid bare; this work generally takes a year, during which time there is no return for the labor.

Once the pay gravel—as it is called—is reached, a long wooden trough called a "sluice," is constructed, the current turned through it, and the gravel shovelled in. This work can only be carried on in the summer-time, when the water is not frozen, so that the warm months are the time for hustling, day and night shifts being employed, with as many men on each as can work conveniently together. In case the barren overlying gravel is very deep, the miners wait until it is frozen and then sink shafts to the pay dirt, which they take out by running tunnels and excavating chambers or "stopes" along the bed rock. In this work they do not use blasting, but build a small fire wherever they wish to penetrate, and as soon as the gravel thaws they shovel it up and convey it out, meanwhile pushing the fire ahead so that more may thaw out. In this way they accumulate the pay dirt in a heap on the surface, and as soon as warm weather comes they shovel it into the sluices as before.

At the time of my visit, the construction of the sluices was a work of considerable labor, for as there was no saw-mill in the country, the boards from which they were made had to be sawed by hand out of felled trees.

In the last few of the trough-sections or sluice-boxes, slats are placed, sometimes transverse, sometimes lengthwise, sometimes oblique, sometimes crossed, forming a grating—all patterns have nearly the same effect, namely, to catch the gold and the other heavy minerals by means of vortexes which are created. Thus behind these slats or "riffles" the gold lodges, while the lighter and barren gravel is swept by the current of water out of the trough, and the heavy stones are thrust out by the shovel of the



WASHING THE GRAVEL IN SLUICE-BOXES.

miner. Nearly the same process as that which in nature concentrates gold at the bottom of the gravels and on top of the bed-rock is adopted by man to cleanse the gold perfectly from the attendant valueless minerals.

Everybody was hospitable along the gulch. I had five different invitations to dinner,—hearty ones, too—and some were loath to be put off with the plea of previous engagement. They were all eager for news from the outside world, from which they had not heard since the fall before; keenly interested in political developments, at home and abroad. They were intelligent and better informed than the ordinary man, for in the long winter months there is little to do but to sleep and read. They develop also a surprising taste for solid literature; nearly everywhere Shakespeare seemed to be the favorite author, all nationalities and degrees of education uniting in the general liking. A gulch that had a full set of Shakespeare considered itself in for a rather cozy winter; and there were regular Shakespeare clubs, where each miner took a certain character to read. Books of science, and especially philosophy, were also widely sought. It has been my theory that in conditions like this, where there are not the thousand and one stimuli to fritter away the intellectual energy, the mental qualities become stronger and keener and the little that is done is done with surprising vigor and clearness.

Down the creek I found a Swede, working over the gravels on a claim that had already been washed once. He had turned off the water from the sluice-boxes and was scraping up the residue from among the riffles. Mostly black heavy magnetic iron particles with many sparkling yellow grains of gold, green hornblendes and ruby-colored garnets. He put all this into a gold pan, (a large shallow steel pan such as used in the first stages of prospecting), and proceeded to "pan out" the gold yet a little more. He immersed the vessel just below the surface of a pool of water, and by skillful twirlings caused the contents to be agitated, and while the heavier particles sank quickly to the bottom, he continuously worked off the lighter ones, allowing them to flow out over the edge of the pan. Yet he was very careful that no bit of gold should escape, and when he had carried this process as far as he could, he invited me into his cabin to see him continue the separation.

Here he spread the "dust" on the table and began blowing it with a small hand-bellows. The garnets, the hornblendes and the fragments of quartz, being lighter than the rest, soon rolled out to one side, leaving only the gold and the magnetic iron. Then with a hand magnet he drew the iron out from the gold, leaving the noble yellow metal nearly pure, in flakes and irregular grains. As the material he had separated still contained some gold, he put this aside to be treated with quicksilver. The quicksilver is poured into the dust, where it forms an amalgam with the gold: it is then strained off, and the amalgam is distilled—the quicksilver is vaporized, leaving the gold behind.

This man had his wife with him, a tired, lonely looking woman. I asked her if there were no more women on the creek. She said no; there was another woman over on Glacier Creek, and she wanted so much to see her sometimes, but she was not a good woman, so she could not go. She was lonely, she said; she had been here three years and had not seen a woman.

From some of the miners I obtained a pair of Indian moccasins, which I padded well with hay and cloth to make them easy for my chafing feet; then I slung my own heavy boots on top of my pack and the next morning bade the gulch good-bye, feeling strengthened from my rest. As I climbed out of the gulch I met the miners who had gone as a committee to escort the whisky, arriving with it, white and speckled with fatigue, speaking huskily, (but not from drinking), yet triumphant. The day was cool and when one is alone one is apt to travel hard; but the unwonted lightness of my feet and the freedom from pain encouraged me, so I set my Indian moccasins into a regular Indian trot, and by noon had covered the entire fifteen miles that constituted the first half of the journey. This brought me to a locality dignified by the name of the "Half-Way House," from a tent-fly of striped drilling left by some one, in which the miners were accustomed to pass the night in their journeys over the trail. Here I found Schrader, who had arrived late the night before and was preparing to make a start. We lighted a fire and made some tea, which with corned beef and crackers, made up our lunch. While we were eating, our old companion Pete, with two more miners, came in from the opposite direction to that from which we had come; he was on his way to visit his old claim on Miller Creek. Afterwards we got away, and kept up a steady Indian trot till we reached our camp on Forty Mile Creek at about six o'clock.

We found Goodrich already arrived and wrestling with the cooking, with which he was having tremendously hard luck. This travelling thirty miles in one day, carrying an average of thirty-five pounds, I considered something of an achievement; but the tiredness which came the next day showed that the energy meant for a long time had been drawn upon.

For four days after that we worked our way up Forty Mile Creek, making on an average seven or eight miles a day. Mosquitoes were abundant, and the weather showery. We used the same method of pulling and poling as before, —a laborious process and one calculated to ruin the most angelic disposition. The river was very low and consequently full of rapids and "riffles," as the miners call the shallow places over which the water splashes. On many of these riffles our boat stuck fast, and we dragged it over the rocks by sheer force, wading out and grasping it by the gunwale. Again, where there were many large boulders piled together in deep water, the boat would stick upon one, and we would be obliged to wade out again and pilot it through by hand, now standing dry upon a high boulder, and now floundering waist deep in the

"TRACKING" A BOAT UPSTREAM.

cold water at some awkward step—maybe losing temper and scolding our innocent companions for having shoved the boat too violently.

We generally worked till late, and began cooking our supper in the dusk—which was now beginning to come—over a camp-fire whose glare dazzled us so that when we tossed our flapjack into the air, preparatory to browning its raw upper side, we often lost sight of it in the gloom, and it sprawled upon the fire, or fell ignominiously over the edge of the frying-pan. Those were awful moments; no one dared to laugh at the cook then. We took turns at cooking, and patience was the watchword. The cook needed it and much more so, those on whom he practiced. One of our number produced a series of slapjacks once which rivalled my famous Chilkoot biscuit. They were leaden, flabby, wretched. We ate one apiece, and ate nothing else for a week, for, as the woodsmen say, it "stuck to our ribs" wonderfully.

"How much baking powder did you put in with the flour?" we asked the cook.

"How should I know?" he answered, indignantly. "What was right, of course."

"Did you measure it?" We persisted, for the slapjack was irritating us inside.

"Anybody," replied the cook, with crushing dignity, "who knows anything, knows how much baking powder to put in with flour without measuring it. I just used common sense." So we concluded that he had put in too much common sense and not enough baking powder.

Just above where the river divides into two nearly equal forks, the water grew so shallow that we could not drag our boat further, so we hauled it up and filled it with green boughs to prevent it from drying and cracking in the sun; then we built a "cache."

It may be best to explain the word "cache," so freely used in Alaska. The term came from the French Canadian voyageurs or trappers; it is pronounced "cash" and comes from the French *cacher*, to hide. So a cache is something hidden, and was applied by these woodsmen to hidden supplies and other articles of value, which could not be carried about, being secreted until the owners should come that way again. In Alaska, when anything was thus left, a high platform of poles was built, supported by the trunks of slender trees, and the goods were left on this platform, covered in some way against the ravages of wild animals. To this structure the name "cache" came to be applied; and later was extended to the storehouses wherein the natives kept their winter supplies of fish and smoked meat, for these houses have a somewhat similar structure, being built on top of upright poles like the old Swiss lake-dwellings.

A "CACHE."

The next morning we shouldered our pack-sacks, containing our blankets, a little food, and other necessities, and were again on the tramp, this time having no trail, however, but being obliged to keep on the side of the stream. Here, as below, the river flowed in one nearly continuous canyon, but on one side or the other flats had been built out on the side where the current was slackest, while on the opposite side was deep water quite up to the bold cliffs; and since the current sweeps from side to side, one encounters levels and gravel flats, and high rocks, on the same side. Many of the cliffs we scaled, crawling gingerly along the almost perpendicular side of the rock. The constant temptation in such climbing is to go higher, where it always looks easier, but when one gets up it seems impossible to return. However, we had no accidents, which, considering how awkward our packs made us, was lucky. At other times we waded the stream to avoid the cliffs.

At night we reached the mouth of Franklin Gulch, where active mining had been going on for some time. The miners were almost out of food, the boat which ordinarily brought provisions from Forty Mile Post having been unable to get up, on account of the low water. Yet they gave us freely what they could. We took possession of an empty log cabin, lighted a fire and toasted some trout which they gave us, and this with crackers and bacon made our meal; then we discovered some bunks with straw in them, which we agreed were gilt-edged, and proceeded to make use of them without delay. Only a few of the total number of miners were here, the rest having gone over the mountain to Chicken Creek, where the latest find of gold was reported. The men had not heard from "the outside" for some time. Even Forty Mile Post was a metropolis for them and they were glad to hear from it. They had few books and only a couple of newspapers three years old.

"Doesn't it get very dull here?" we asked of an old stager; "what do you do for amusement?"

"Do!" he echoed with grave humor, "Do! why, God bless you, we 'ave very genteel amusements. As for readin' an' litrachure an' all that, wy, dammit, wen the fust grub comes in the spring, we 'ave a meetin' an' we call all the boys together an' we app'int a chairman an' then some one reads from the directions on the bakin'-powder boxes."

I set out alone for Chicken Creek the next morning, following a line of blazed trees up over the mountain from Franklin Creek. I had been told that once up on the divide one could look right down into Chicken Creek, and I have no doubt that this is true, for on attaining the top of the hill a stretch of country twenty miles across was spread out before me as on a map, while directly below was a considerable branch of Forty Mile Creek, divided into many closely adjacent gulches. One of these must be Chicken Creek, but which? There were no tents and no smoke visible, much as the eye might strain through the field-glasses. Just here the trail gave out, the blazer having evidently grown tired of blazing. Thinking to obtain a better view into the valley, I set out along the hill which curved around it, tramping patiently along until nearly night over the sharp ridges, but without ever seeing any signs of life in the great desolate country below me. When the dark shadows were striking the valleys, I caught sight of what appeared to be a faint smoke in the heart of a black timbered gulch, and I made straightway down the mountain-side for it, hurrying for fear the fire should be extinguished before I could get close enough to it to find the place. I had no doubt that this came from the log cabin of some prospector, who would be only too glad to welcome a weary stranger with a warm supper and a blanket on the floor.

On getting down, away from the bare rocks on the mountain ridge, I found deep moss, tiresome to my wearied limbs, and further down great areas of "niggerheads"—the terror of travellers in the northern swamps. These niggerheads are tufts of vegetation which grow upwards by successive accumulations till they are knee high or even more. They are scattered thickly about, but each tuft is separated completely from all the rest, leaving hardly space to step between; if one attempts to walk on top of them he will slip off, so there is nothing to do but to walk on the ground, lifting the legs over the obstacles with great exertion. The tops of the tufts are covered with long grass, which droops down on all sides, whence the name niggerheads,—*têtes de femme* or women's heads is the name given them by the French Canadian voyageurs.

Still lower the brush and vines became so thick that it was almost impossible to force the way through in places. At last I emerged upon a grey lifeless area which seemed to have been burned over. There were no trees or plants, but the bare blackened sticks of what had once been a young growth of spruce still stood upright, though some trunks had fallen and lay piled, obstacles to travelling. The whole looked peculiarly forlorn. A little further I came to the spot where I had seen the smoke. There was nothing but a stagnant pool covered so deep with green scum that one caught only an occasional glimpse of the black water beneath, and from this, unsavory mists were rising in the chill of the evening air. I had mistaken these vapors for smoke from my post miles up the mountain. My dream of a log cabin and a blanket went up likewise in smoke.

It was now eleven o'clock at night, and twilight; I had walked at least twenty miles through a rough country and could go no further. So I broke off the smaller dried trees and sticks and lighted a fire, then I ate some crackers and bacon that I had with me, but I did not dare to drink the water of the stagnant pool, which was all there was to be had. The night grew frosty, and I had no blankets; but I lay down close to the fire and caught fifteen-minute naps. Once I woke with the smell of burning cloth in my nostrils: in my sleep I had edged too close to the grateful warmth, and my coat and the notebook in my pocket, containing all my season's notes, had caught fire. I rolled over on them and crushed out the fire with my fingers, and after that I shivered away a little further from the fire. At about three o'clock it grew light enough to see the surrounding country, and I started out again for the first point I had reached on the ridge the morning before, thinking to get back to Franklin gulch, for I was thoroughly exhausted. On reaching the ridge, however, I met a miner coming over the trail; he agreed to pilot me to the new prospects, so I turned back again.

There were fifteen or twenty men in the gulch which we finally reached, all living in tents in a very primitive way, and all very short of provisions, yet, hospitable to the last morsel, they freely offered the best they had. They were poor, too; everybody does not get rich in the gold diggings, even in Alaska. In fact, previous to the Klondike discovery, the largest net sum of money taken out by any one man was about $30,000, while hundreds could not pay for their provisions or get enough to buy a ticket out of the country. The Klondike, too, has been badly lied about. Not one man in twenty who goes there makes more than a bare living, and many have to "hustle" for that harder than they would at home. So the hospitality of the miners, such as I found it nearly everywhere on the Yukon, is not a mere act of courtesy which costs nothing, but the genuine unselfishness which cheerfully divides the last crust with a passing stranger.

Having been strengthened by two square meals, simple but sufficient, I started back for Franklin Gulch the same night. It began to rain in torrents on the way, and this, as usual, drove out the mosquitoes and made them unusually savage. They attacked me in such numbers that in spite of my gloves and veil I was nearly frantic. The best relief was to stride along at a good round pace, for this kept most of the pests at my back, and gave me a vent for my wrought-up nerves; and at the same time I had the satisfaction of knowing I was "getting there." The thong of my moccasin became undone, but I did not dare to stop to tie it, but kept plunging along, shuffling it with me. I reached our cabin at the mouth of Franklin Gulch, and the sight of the bunk with straw in it, and the familiar grey blanket, was sweet to me.

Next day we bade the miners at the creek's mouth good-bye, with promises to hurry up the provision-boat if possible, and made our way to where we had left our boat and cache. The next morning we launched the Skookum again, and began our journey back. Going down was quicker work than coming up, not so laborious, and far more exciting. Owing to the lowness of the water, the stream was one succession of small rapids, which were full of boulders; and to steer the boat, careering like a race horse, among these, was a pretty piece of work. One pulled the oars to give headway, another steered, and the third stood in the bow, pole in hand, to fend us off from such rocks as we were in danger of striking. We soon found that the safest part of such a rapid is where the waves are roughest, for here the water, rebounding from the shallow shore on either side, meets in a narrow channel, where it tosses and foams, yet here is the only place where there is no danger of striking.

The second day out we ran twenty-five or thirty of these rapids. In running through one we pulled aside to avoid a large boulder sticking up in midstream, and then saw in front of us another boulder just at the surface, which we had not before noticed. It was too late, however, and the boat stuck fast in a second, and began to turn over from the force of the water behind. With one accord we all leaped out of the boat, expecting to find foothold somewhere among the boulders, and hold the boat or shove her off so that she should not capsize; but none of us touched bottom, though we sank to our necks, still grasping the gunwale of the boat. Our being out, however, made the boat so much lighter that she immediately slipped over the rock and went gloriously down the rapid, broadside, we hanging on. As soon as we could we clambered in, each grasped a paddle or oars or pole, and by great good luck we had no further accident.

Some distance further down we again sighted white water ahead, where the stream ran hard against a perpendicular cliff. Some miners were "rocking" gravel for gold in the bars just above; and we yelled to them to know if we could run the rapids.

"Yes," came the answer, "if you're a d——d good man!"

"All right—thanks!" we cried, and sailed serenely through. This was known by the cheerful name of Dead Man's Riffle. Owing to the strong wind blowing, the mosquitoes were not very annoying these few days; the sun was warm and bright, and the hillsides were covered thickly with a carmine flower which gave them a general brilliant appearance. These things, with the exhilaration of running rapids, made a sort of vacation—an outing, a picnic, as it were—in contrast to our previous hard work. When we got to the Miller Creek trail we took on a couple of miners who wanted to get out of the country, but had no boat in which to go down to Forty Mile Post. They had worked for some time and had barely succeeded in making enough to buy food, and now, a little homesick and discouraged, they had made up their minds to try to get out and back to "God's country" as they called it—Colorado. With their help we let our boat down through the "Cañon" safely, and the next day,—the 29th of July,—arrived at Forty Mile Post.

At the Post we found that plenty was reigning, for the first steamboat had arrived, bringing a lot of sorely-needed provisions. The trader in charge gave us a fine lunch of eggs, moosemeat, canned asparagus, and other delicacies, and then we took possession of a deserted log cabin. On ransacking around we found a Yukon lamp, consisting of a twisted bit of cotton stuck into a pint bottle of seal oil, and when it began to grow dusk we lighted it and sat down at the table and wrote home to our friends; for the steamer had gone further up the river and would return in a few days, so that letters sent down by her would probably be ahead of us in getting home—eight thousand miles! We had laid in a new stock of provisions. Flour, I remember was $8.00 for 100 pounds, and we managed to get a few of the last eggs which the steamer had brought, at $1.00 a dozen.

The Skookum had suffered considerably in our Forty Mile trip, and we spent a large part of the next day in patching her, plugging her seams with oakum and sealing them with hot pitch. One of our number, who was cooking for the boat-menders, suddenly appeared on the scene, chasing a pack of yelping dogs with our long camp-axe. He had gone to the woodpile for a moment, leaving the door ajar. At this moment a grey dog whose tail had been cut off somehow, was looking around the log house opposite—he had been on guard and watching our door for the last twenty-four hours. He uttered a low yelp which brought a dozen others together from all quarters, all lean, strong and sneaking; and they slipped into our door. When the cook turned from the woodpile a minute later he was just in time to aim a billet at the last one as he emerged from the cabin with our cheese in his mouth. They fled swiftly and were not to be caught: and an examination showed that they had, in their silent and well organized raid, cleaned our larder thoroughly, having eaten the delicacies on the spot and carried off nearly all the rest.

NATIVE DOGS.

The Indian dog is a study, for he is much unlike his civilized brother. He rarely barks, never at strangers, and takes no notice of a white man who arrives in the village,—even though the village may never have seen such a thing, and the children scream, the women flee, and the men are troubled and silent—but he howls nights. A dog wakes up in the middle of the night, yawns, looks at the stars, and listens. There is not a sound.

"How dull and stupid it is here in Ouklavigamute," he thinks; "not nearly as lively as it was in Mumtreghloghmembramute. There we had fights nearly every night, sometimes twice. If I only knew a dog I was sure I could lick—anyhow, here goes for a good long howl. I'll show them that there is a dog in town with spirit enough to make a noise, anyhow." With that he tunes up —do, re, mi, tra-la-la, dulce, crescendo, grand Wagnerian smash. The other dogs wake up and one nudges the other and says, "Oh, my, what a lark! Isn't it fun! Let's yell too—whoop, roo, riaow!" And just as men get excited at a football game, or an election, or when the fire-alarm rings, these dogs yell and grow red in the face. Then the inhabitants wake up and get out after the dogs, who run and yelp; and after a while each cur crawls into a hiding-place and goes to sleep. In the morning they wake up and wriggle their tails. "What enthusiasm there was last night—but—er—I didn't quite catch on to the idea—of course I yelled to help the other fellows —it's such fun being enthusiastic, you know."

This happens every night. The Indian dog makes it a point to stand around like a bump on a log and look stupid; when he has fooled you to that extent he will surprise you some day by a daring theft, for he is clever as a man and quick as an express train.

CHAPTER V.

THE AMERICAN CREEK DIGGINGS.

FROM Forty Mile we floated down the Yukon again, and in a day's journey camped at the mouth of Mission Creek, not then down on the map. It had received its name from miners who had come there prospecting. Several of them were encamped in tents, and they came over and silently watched our cooking, evidently sizing us up.

"When did you leave the Outside?" asked a blue-eyed, blonde, shaggy man. (The Outside means anywhere but Alaska—a man who has been long in the country falls into the idea of considering himself in a kind of a prison, and refers to the rest of the world as lying beyond the door of this.)

"In June," we replied.

"How did the Harvard-Yale football game come out last fall?" he inquired eagerly—it was now August, and nearly time for the next!

"Harvard was whipped, of course," we answered.

"Look here," he said, firing up, "you needn't say 'of course.' Harvard is *my* college!"

I was engaged in reinforcing my overalls with a piece of bacon sack; I could not help being amused at this fair-haired savage being a college man. "That makes no difference," I replied. "Harvard's *our* college too—all of us."

"What are you giving me?" he ejaculated, and at first I thought he looked a little angry, as if he thought we were trifling with him; and then a little supercilious, as he surveyed the forlorn condition of my clothing, which the removal of the overalls I wore instead of trousers had exposed.

"Hard facts," I said. "Classes of '92 and '93. Lend me your sheath-knife."

"Why-ee!" he exclaimed. "Ninety-three's my class. Shake!—Rah, rah, rah! Who are we? —You know!—Who are we? We are Harvard ninety-three—what can we do?—WHAT CAN WE DO?—We can lick Harvard ninety-two—cockadoodle-doodle-doo—Harvard, Harvard—ninety-two—hooray!"

The next day we tramped over to American

Creek together, where some new gold diggings were just being developed. The Harvard miner had had no tea for several months, as he told us (and one who has been living in Alaska knows what a serious thing that is) so we brought a pound package along to make a drink for lunch. At American Creek we got a large tomato can outside of a miner's cabin, and the Harvard man offered to do the brewing.

"How much shall I put in?" he asked.

"Suit yourself," was the answer.

He took a tremendous handful. "Is this too much?" he asked, apologetically. "You see, I haven't had tea for three months, and I feel like having a good strong cup." We assured him that the strength of the drink was to be limited only by his own desires. He was tempted to another handful, and so little by little, till half the package was in the can. When he was satisfied, we told him to keep the remaining half pound for the next time. He was disappointed.

"If I had known you intended giving it to me," he replied, "I wouldn't have used so much." We drank the tea eagerly, for we were tired, but my head spun afterwards.

There were some paying claims already on this creek—it was a little stream which one could leap at almost any point—and on the day we arrived we saw the clean-up in one of them. It was very dazzling to see the coarse gold that was scraped from the riffles of the sluice-boxes into the baking-powder cans which were used to store it. There was gold of all sizes, from fine dust up to pieces as big as pumpkin seed; but this was the result of a week's work of several men, and much time had been spent in getting the claim ready before work could begin. Still, the results were very good, the clean-up amounting, I was told, to "thirty dollars to the shovel"—that is, thirty dollars a day to each man shovelling gravel into the sluices.

On the edge of the stream the rock, a rusty slate, lay loosely; one of the miners was thrusting his pick among the pieces curiously, and on turning one over showed the crevice beneath filled with flat pieces of yellow gold of all sizes. They were very thin and probably worth only about five dollars in all, but lying as they did the sight was enough to give one the gold fever, if he did not yet have it. The Harvard man and his companion were immediately seized with a violent attack, and set off down the stream to stake out claims, meanwhile talking over plans of wintering here, so as to be early on the ground the next spring.

I slept on the floor of a miner's cabin that night and the next morning made my way back to our camp on the Yukon.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BIRCH CREEK DIGGINGS.

THE next night we reached that part of the river where Circle City was put down on the map we carried, but not finding it, camped on a gravelly beach beneath a timbered bluff. When we went up the bluff to get wood for our fire the mosquitoes fairly drove us back and continued bothering us all night, biting through our blankets and giving us very little peace, though we slept with our hats, veils, and gloves on. We afterwards found that Circle City had at first been actually started at about this point, but was soon afterwards moved further down, to where we found it the next day.

We had been looking forward to our arrival in this place for several reasons, one of which was that we had had no fresh meat for over a month, and hoped to find moose or caribou for sale. As our boat came around the bend and approached the settlement of log huts dignified by the name of Circle City, we noticed quite a large number of people crowding down to the shore to meet us, and as soon as we got within hailing distance one of the foremost yelled out:

"Got any moose meat?"

When we answered "No," the crowd immediately dispersed and we did not need to inquire about the supply of fresh meat in camp.

We landed in front of the Alaska Commercial Company's store, kept by Jack McQuesten. On jumping ashore, I went up immediately, in search of information, and as I stepped in I heard my name called in a loud voice. I answered promptly "Here," with no idea of what was wanted, for there was a large crowd in the store; but from the centre of the room something was passed from hand to hand towards me, which proved to be a package of letters from home—the first news I had received for over two months. On inquiry I found that the mail up the river had just arrived, and the storekeeper, who was also postmaster *ex officio*, had begun calling out the addresses on the letters to the expectant crowd of miners, and had got to my name as I entered the door—a coincidence, I suppose, but surely a pleasant and striking one.

We obtained lodgings in a log house, large for Circle City, since it contained two rooms. It was already occupied by two customhouse officers, the only representatives of Uncle Sam whom we encountered in the whole region. One room had been used as a storeroom and carpenter-shop, and here, on the shavings, we spread out our blankets and made ourselves at home.

The building had first been built as a church by missionaries, but as they were absent for some time after its completion, one room was fitted up with a bar by a newly arrived enterprising liquor-dealer, till the officers, armed in their turn with the full sanction of the church, turned the building into a customhouse and hoisted the American flag, on a pole fashioned out of a slim spruce by the customs officer himself. The officers, when we came there, were sleeping days and working nights on the trail of some whisky smugglers who were in the habit of bringing liquor down the river from Canadian territory, in defiance of the American laws.

There were only a few hundred men in Circle

City at this time, most of the miners being away at the diggings, for this was one of the busiest times of the year. These diggings were sixty miles from the camp, and were only to be reached by a foot trail which led through wood and swamp. Several newcomers in the country were camped around the post, waiting for cooler weather before starting out on the trail, for the mosquitoes, they said, were frightful. It was said that nobody had been on the trail for two weeks, on this account, and blood-curdling stories were told of the torments of some that had dared to try, and how strong men had sat down on the trail to sob, quite unable to withstand the pest. However, we had seen mosquitoes before, and the next morning struck out for the trail.

It was called a wagon road, the brush and trees having been cut out sufficiently wide for a wagon to pass; taken as a footpath, however, it was just fair. The mosquitoes were actually in clouds; they were of enormous size, and had vigorous appetites. It was hot, too, so that their bites smarted worse than usual. The twelve miles, which the trail as far as the crossing of

Birch Creek had been said to be, lengthened out into an actual fifteen, over low rolling country, till we descended a sharp bluff to the stream. Here a hail brought a boatman across to ferry us to the other side, where there stood two low log houses facing one another, and connected overhead by their projecting log roofs.

ON THE TRAMP AGAIN.

This was the Twelve Mile Cache, a road-house for miners, and here we spent the night. Each of the buildings contained but a single room, one house being used as a sleeping apartment, the other as kitchen and dining-room. The host had no chairs to offer us, but only long benches; and there were boxes and stumps for those who could not find room on the benches, which were shorter than the tables. We ate out of tin dishes and had only the regulation bacon, beans and apple-sauce, yet it was with a curious feeling that we sat down to the meal and got up from it, as if we were enjoying a little bit of luxury—for so it seemed to us then. There were eleven of us who slept in the building which had been set apart for sleeping; we all provided our own blankets and slept on the floor, which was no other than the earth, and was so full of humps and hollows, and projecting sharp sticks where saplings had been cut off, that one or the other of the company was in misery nearly all night, and roused the others with his cursings and growling. The eight who were not of our party were miners returning from the diggings with their season's earnings of gold in the packs strapped to their backs; they all carried big revolvers and were on the lookout for possible highwaymen.

On getting up we washed in the stream, ate breakfast, and prepared to start out again. In the fine, bright morning light we noticed a sign nailed up on the dining cabin, which we had not seen in the dusk of the preceding evening. It was a notice to thieves, and a specimen of miners' law in this rough country.

NOTICE.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

At a general meeting of miners held in Circle City it was the unanimous Verdict that all thieving and stealing shall be punished by WHIPPING AT THE POST AND BANISHMENT FROM THE COUNTRY, *the severity of the whipping and the guilt of the accused to be determined by the Jury.*

SO ALL THIEVES BEWARE.

Our packs were about twenty-five pounds each, and contained blankets, a little corned beef and crackers, and a few other necessities: they were heavy enough before the day was over. From Twelve Mile Cache to the diggings we travelled over what was called the Hog'em trail, since it led to the gulch of that name: it ran for the whole distance through a swamp, and was said to be a very good trail in winter—in summer it was vile. We had been informed of a way which branched off from the Hog'em route and ran over drier ground to a road-house called the "Central House," but we were unable to pick up this; and we discovered afterwards that it had been blazed from the Central House, but that the blazing had been discontinued two or three miles before reaching the junction of the Hog'em trail, the axe-man having got tired, or having gone home for his dinner and forgotten to come back. So people like ourselves, starting for the diggings, invariably followed the Hog'em trail, whether they would or not, and those coming out of the diggings and returning by way of the Central House, followed the blazes through the woods till they stopped, and then wandered ahead blindly, often getting lost.

The Hog'em trail was a continuous bed of black, soft, stinking, sticky mud, for it had been well travelled over. At times there was thick moss; and again broad pools of water of uncertain depth, with mud bottoms, to be waded through; and long stretches covered with "nigger-heads." We walked twelve miles of this trail without stopping or eating, for the mosquitoes were bloodthirsty, and even hunger can hardly tempt a man to bestride a "nigger-head" and lunch under such conditions. We arrived at night at what was called the "Jump-Off,"—a sharp descent which succeeded a gradual rise—where we found two sturdy men, both old guides from the Adirondacks, engaged in felling the trees which grew on the margin of the stream, and piling them into a log house. This they intended to use as a road-house, for the travel here was considerable, especially in the winter. In the meantime they were living in a tent, yet maintained a sort of hostelry for travellers, in that they dispensed meals to them. As soon as they were through with the big log they were getting into place when we arrived, they built a fire on the ground and cooked supper, after which we were invited to spread our blankets, with the stars and the grey sky for a shelter. They made some apologies at not being able to offer us a tent—theirs was a tiny affair,—and promised better accommodations if we would come back a month from then, when the cabin would be finished and the chinks neatly plugged with muck and moss.

The next day's journey was again twelve

miles, over about the same kind of trail. Crossing a sluggish stream which was being converted into a swamp by encroaching vegetation, we were obliged to wade nearly waist deep, and then our feet rested on such oozy and sinking mud that we did not know but the next moment we might disappear from sight entirely. Further on, the trail ran fair into a small lake, whose shores we had to skirt. There was no trail around, but much burnt and felled timber lay everywhere, and climbing over this, balancing our packs in the meantime, was "such fun." Sometimes we would jump down from a high log, and, slipping a little, our packs would turn us around in the air, and we would fall on our backs, sprawling like turtles, and often unable to get out of our awkward position without help from our comrades.

Reedy lakes such as this, fringed with moss and coarse grass, with stunted spruce a little distance away, are common through this swampy country, and have something of the picturesque about them. The surrounding vegetation is very abundant. Excellent cranberries are found, bright red in color and small in size; and on a little drier ground blue-berries flourish. Raspberries

HOG'EM JUNCTION ROAD-HOUSE.

of good size, although borne on bushes usually not more than two or three inches high, are also here; and red and black currants.

At the end of the second day we arrived at Hog'em Junction, where the Hog'em trail unites with that leading off to the other gulches where gold is found. Here was the largest road-house we had seen. There were fifteen or twenty men hanging about, mostly miners returning or going to the diggings, and a professional hunter—a sort of wild man, who told thrilling stories of fighting bears.

One of the structures we saw here was called the dog-corral and was a big enclosure built of logs. Dogs were used to carry most of the provisions to the Birch Creek diggings from Circle City, freighting beginning as soon as the snow fell and everything froze hard. There was a pack of these animals around the inn—a sneaking, cringing, hungry lot, rarely barking at intruders or strangers, and easily cowed by a man, but very prone to fight among themselves. They were all Indian dogs, and were of two varieties; one long-haired, called Mahlemut, from the fact that its home is among the Mahlemut Eskimo of the lower Yukon; the other short-haired, and stouter. Both breeds are of large size, and a good dog is capable of pulling as much as 400 pounds on a sleigh, when the snow is very good, and the weather not too cold. The dog-corral is used to put the sleighs in when the freighter arrives, and the dogs are left outside, to keep them away from the provisions. The winter price for freight from Circle City was seven cents per pound; in summer it was forty.

We ate breakfast and supper at Hog'em Junction, paying a dollar apiece for the meals; and when we learned that the bacon which was served to us had cost sixty-five cents a pound, the charge did not seem too much. No good bacon was to be had, that which we ate being decidedly strong; and even this kind had to be hunted after at this time of the year. Not only was food very high in the diggings, but it could not always be bought, so that in the winter, when freighting was cheap, enough could not often be obtained to last through the next summer, and the miners had to wait for the steamer to come up the Yukon. The Hog'em Junction innkeeper paid twenty dollars for a case of evaporated fruit, such as cost a dollar in San Francisco; condensed milk was one dollar a can, and sugar eighty-five cents a pound. The previous winter beans brought one dollar a pound, and butter two and a half dollars a roll. In summer all prices were those of Circle City, plus forty cents freighting, plus ten cents handling. So a sack of potatoes, which I was told would cost twenty-five cents in the state of Washington, cost here eighty-five dollars. Even in Circle City the prices, though comparatively low, were not exactly what people would expect at a bargain counter in one of our cities. Winchester rifles were sold for fifty dollars apiece, and calico brought fifty cents a yard. Luckily there were few women folks in the country at that time!

Of the Hog'em Junction Inn I have little distinct recollection except concerning the meals. We were so hungry when we reached there that the food question was indelibly branded on our memory. For the rest I remember that when supper was cleared away, the guests wrapped themselves in their private blankets and lay down anywhere they thought best. There was a log outhouse with some rude bunks filled with straw, for those who preferred, so in a short time we were stowed away with truly mediæval simplicity, to sleep heavily until the summons came to breakfast,—for there were no "hotel hours" for lazy guests at this inn, and he who did not turn out for a seven o'clock breakfast could go without.

We three separated on leaving here, each taking a different trail, so that we might see all of the gulches in a short space of time. I shouldered my blankets and after a seven mile tramp through the brush came to the foot of Hog'em Gulch, which was in a deep valley in the hills that now rose above the plain. This gulch derived its name from the fact that its discoverer tried to *hog* all the claims for himself, taking up some for his wife, his wife's brother, his brother, and the niece of his wife's particular friend; even, it is said, inventing fictitious personages that he might stake out claims for them. The other miners disappointed him in his schemes for gain, and they contemptuously called the creek "Hog'em." Afterwards a faction of the claim-owners proposed to change the name to Deadwood, claiming that it sounded better and was also appropriate, inasmuch as they had got that variety of timber on the schemer. It was somewhat unkindly asserted, however, by those who were not residents of the gulch, that the first name was always the most appropriate, since the spirit of the discoverer seemed to have gone down to his successors.

Be that as it may, I noticed a remarkable difference between the men whom I found working their claims along the creek and the miners of Forty Mile. Nobody showed the slightest hospitality or friendliness, except one man on the lower creek, who invited me to share his little tent at night. He had not enough blankets to keep him warm, so I added mine, and beneath them both we two slept very comfortably. In the morning he cooked a very simple meal over a tiny fire outside of the tent—wood was scarce along here—and invited me, with little talk, to partake of it with him. He was evidently far from happy in this cheerless existence; he was working for wages, which, to be sure, were ten dollars a day, but with provisions as high as they were this was nothing much, and the work was so hard that, great stalwart man as he was, he

ON HOG'EM GULCH.

had lost thirty pounds since he had begun. He would have liked to return to the States, for he was somewhat discouraged, but he could not save enough money to pay for the expensive passage out. I hope he has struck it rich since then and brought back to his wife and babies the fortune he went to seek!

After I left this silent man, I found none who showed much interest. Some of them were a little curious as to what I was doing, but most of them were fiercely and feverishly working to make the most of the hours and weeks which remained of the mining season; the run of gold was ordinarily very good, and all were anxious to make as good a final clean-up as possible. At dinner-time everybody rushed to their meal, and I sat down by the side of the trail, ate stale corned beef, broken crackers, and drank the creek water. When I was half-way through I observed two young men in a tent munching their meal, but watching me; and a sort of righteous indignation came upon me, as must always seize the poor when he beholds the abundance of the rich man's table. I walked into the tent and asked for a share of their dinner. They gave me a place, but so surlily that I said hotly, "See here, I'll pay you for this dinner, so don't be so stingy about it." The offer to pay was an insult to the miner's tradition and one of them growled out,

"None of that kind of talk, d'ye hear? You're welcome to whatever we've got, and don't yer forget it! Only there's been a good many bums along here lately, and we was getting tired of them."

After this they were pleasanter, although I could not help reflecting that I was actually a bum, as they put it, and mentally pitied the professional tramp, if his evil destiny should ever lead him into the Yukon country.

As it grew near nightfall I climbed out of the gulch, and, crossing the ridge, dropped down into Greenhorn Gulch, which, with its neighbor Tinhorn Gulch, form depressions parallel to Hog'em. There was only one claim working here, and on this the supply of water was so scarce that not much washing could be done. The people seemed like those of Hog'em Gulch, and took little notice of strangers. Having learned a new code of manners on Birch Creek, however, I walked into the cabin where one of the claim owners was getting supper. He was a short, powerful, fierce-eyed man, who never smiled, and spoke with an almost frenzied earnestness. He did not speak for some time, however, but glared suspiciously when I walked in. I looked at him without nodding, took off my pack and put it in the corner, sat down on a stool and fished my pipe out of my pocket. He glared until he was tired, and then said: "Hallo!"

"Hallo," I returned, and drawing up to the table, began working with my specimens and notebook. Looking up and finding him still regarding me, I continued: "How's the claim turning out?"

"Pretty fair!" he growled. "What in h—l are *you* reportin' for?" "Uncle Sam," I replied. He was from the moonshine district of Tennessee, and this was no recommendation to him, so he kept his eye on me. Presently his "pardner" came in and looked at me inquiringly. I spoke to him quite warmly, as if I was welcoming him to the cabin. Soon supper was ready, and the fierce-eyed moonshiner looked at me four or five times, then said, beckoning me to the table: "Set up."

After supper the two men crawled into their bunks; I spread my blankets on the floor. The Tennessee man poked his head out.

"Goin' to sleep on the floor?" he asked.

"Yes," answered I. He crawled out and pulled a caribou hide from the rafters above.

"Lay on that," he said.

When I thanked him, he looked at me suspiciously.

In the morning I sat down to breakfast without being asked, and ate enormously and silently. The moonshiner warmed up at this.

"You're a better sort of feller than I thought at first," he said; "I thought you was goin' to be one of them d—d polite fellers."

"Me? Oh, no; not me," I replied, "you're thinkin' of some one else, I reckon?"

After breakfast he showed me his gold dust; a little flat piece interested me, and I said, "Gimme that, I'll pay yer; what's it worth?"

"Nothin'," he replied. "Yer can take it."

Afterwards I shouldered my pack and made for the door; when I got there I stopped and looked over my shoulder and said, "So long!"

"So long to *you!*" he answered, looking after me with more human interest than I had previously seen in him. "Stop here when you come this way again."

I climbed out of the gulch and walked along the mountain ridge for a while, encountering, whenever there was no wind, swarms of the tiny gnats which the miners often dread worse than the mosquitoes. They are so numerous as actually to obscure the sun in places and they fill nose, ears, and eyes; there is no escape from them, for they are so small that they go through the meshes of a mosquito net with the greatest ease. On top of the ridge, where the wind blew, they disappeared. As I walked along here I met a prospector, and after a friendly talk with him, dropped down another mountain-side to the bed of Independence Creek, and followed that to the junction of Mammoth Creek, so called from the number of bones of the extinct elephant, or mammoth, which are buried there. Wading across a swamp, I found in the brush another road-house, the Mammoth Junction. This was a large log building containing a single room, which served as kitchen, dining-room, parlor, general bedroom, and barroom. At first I was the only guest, but afterwards a prospector arrived from a hard trip to the Tanana, and he related his experiences; how he had shot three bears, seven caribou, and a moose in seven days. He was a tall, well-built Cape Bretoner, Dick McDonald by name. When he got tired of talking I spread my blankets on the floor (for which privilege I paid fifty cents) and gladly stowed myself away for the night.

The next day a tramp of seventeen miles brought me to the Central House, on the way home from the diggings; for although our rendezvous should have been at Mammoth Junction, yet I concluded to wait for the others at Circle City. The trail was very bad, and during the first part of the journey the gnats were as annoying as they had been on the mountains the day before. There were millions of them. During the last part the mosquitoes got the upper hand, and gave me the strictest attention.

"Ah," I soliloquized, perspiring freely and tugging at my pack straps like a jaded horse at his harness, "the trials of an Alaskan pioneer! Stumbling and staggering through mud knee-deep, and through nigger-heads, wading streams, fighting gnats and mosquitoes, suffering often from hunger and thirst, and rolling into one's sole pair of blankets under the frosty stars or the rain-clouds!"

When my views were thus gloomy, a smell of smoke came to my nostrils, and crossing a little stream on a fallen tree, I came to the friendly inn I was seeking.

The next morning, at five o'clock by my watch and eight by the host's, (it is unnecessary to observe that there was no standard time used in the Birch Creek district) I started for Twelve Mile Cache. The first part of the trail was fairly well worn, but was covered with small dead trees which had fallen across it, necessitating the continual lifting of the feet and the taking of irregular steps. Ten miles of this was enough to make one very weary. I lunched on my stale corned beef and cracker crumbs, and drank from a little creek that I crossed. Soon after this, I came to a place where a newly blazed trail, leading to the Twelve Mile Cache, diverged from the older path, which ran up over the mountains. Deciding to take the newer route, I found it very hard walking, especially as my feet were clad in the Eskimo sealskin boot, or makalok, which are soft and offer little protection. Much of the road lay among immense untrodden nigger-heads and in swampy brush, where the sticks which had been cut off in making the trail stuck up three or four inches above the ground, just convenient for stubbing the toe; and yet the long grass quite concealed them, so they could not be avoided. Afterwards the trail struck into an old winter sleighing road, and I got on more rapidly for a few miles; but the mosquitoes had increased to legions and stung painfully. The gnats and flies were also numerous, the big deer flies biting my ears where the mosquito netting rested on them, till they were bloody.

At about four o'clock the cut trail came to an end, and here was a stick pointing into the woods, inscribed:

"FOLLER THES BLAIES TO TWELV MILL HOUSE. SIX MILLS TO TWELV MILL HOUSE 9 MILLS CENTRAL HOUSE."

The "blaies" (blazes) had been newly cut, and as I started to follow them, it seemed that they led through the thickest of the brush, where it was almost impossible to fight one's way, especially with a pack, which protrudes on both sides of the shoulders, and which often wedges one firmly between two saplings. Soon the blazes grew further and further apart; after leaving one it often took ten minutes to find the next, scouting around everywhere in the tangle of bushes. The mosquitoes kept up their attacks, and my head began to ache splittingly, partly from their bites and partly from the jerking of the head strap of my pack in my struggles through the brush.

At last in despair I abandoned the attempt to follow the blazes, and turning square away from them, struck off in the direction where I knew the Hog'em Junction trail, by which we had reached the diggings, must lie, steering by my compass. Very soon I found better walking,—comparatively open swampy patches, with alder thickets between—and in half a mile I cut into the trail I was seeking. Three miles of this trail brought me to Twelve Mile Cache, after one of the hardest days I had had in Alaska. Compared with such a trip as this the dreaded Chilkoot Pass was not so formidable, after all. The entire distance I had travelled was twenty-seven miles. I had counted my paces through it all, and they tallied with the count of my companions, who came on later.

For supper at Twelve Mile Cache we had fresh fish,—pike and Arctic trout—taken from a trap in the river, and fresh vegetables raised on the roof, which was covered with a luxuriant garden. A thick layer of rich loam had been put on, and the seed dropped into this throve amazingly, for the fires inside the cabin supplied warmth, and the plants did not have to fight against the eternal frost which lies everywhere a short distance below the surface. The long glorious sunshine of the northern summer did the rest, and splendid potatoes, rutabagas, cabbages, beets, and lettuce were the results.

The fifteen miles back to Circle City the next day was a very weary walk, for my overwork on the day before had left me tired out. The mosquitoes were maddening on the last part of the trail, in spite of gloves and veil. On getting into Circle City, however, I was kindly welcomed by my friends, the customs officers, and given a square meal. The room we had occupied as a bedroom had, in the short time since we had left, been put to still other uses. A newly arrived physician was using it for a laboratory, and a man who had brought a scow load of merchandise down the Yukon was storing his stuff in the same room. Also a red-sweatered young man turned up who said he had been told to sleep here, but the customs officers kicked him out and he went and slept under an upturned boat on the bank. After a bath I felt refreshed, but glancing into a looking-glass for the first time for many a day, I saw that my appearance was still against me. I was a long-haired, bushy-bearded, ragged, belted and knifed wild man, not fair to look upon.

I spent the next day in wandering around town in a desultory fashion, and on returning to the customhouse found the door locked. When I knocked I was challenged and then cautiously admitted: on entering I was surprised to see the officers with their rifles ready for use alongside of them. Ross lifted up the strip of calico which formed a curtain hiding the space under the bed and disclosed two good-sized kegs. These he told me he and Wendling (the other officer) had seized while we were away. It was, and is, entirely illegal to bring liquor into the territory of Alaska, and this law and its attendant features have brought about much of the dishonesty and corruption which have made the inside history of Alaskan government since its acquisition by Americans such a dismal one.

In Circle City liquor was freely brought down the river from the British side of the boundary. The first customs inspector was said to have been a notorious rascal, who had not only winked at the bringing in of liquor, but had taken a hand in the trade himself. The present representatives of the government, however, seemed to wish to do their duty, and their watching nights and sleeping days had finally resulted in their trapping the smugglers as they were landing, and they had captured the whisky and had brought it to the customhouse, where the whole camp knew it to be. The whole camp was interested in it, moreover, for it had been whisky-dry ; and the feeling towards the officers was probably none of the best in any quarter, although most recognized that they were simply doing their duty. At the enormously high prices which prevailed, these two kegs were worth several thousand dollars, and so were valuable booty. Therefore, a plot had been hatched to recover the liquor, and this plot had come to the officers' ears a few hours before the *coup* was to have taken place. Hence the caution and warlike preparations which greeted me. The men from whom the whisky had been taken were the leaders in the scheme, and they had also enlisted several miners, among them a gigantic fellow who called himself "Caribou Bill," and

CUSTOM HOUSE AT CIRCLE CITY.

whom I had met on the trail to the diggings. Bill gave the thing away by going to a saloon-keeper and trying to borrow a second revolver —he already had one. On being questioned as to why he wanted it, he took the saloon-keeper into his confidence. The saloon-keeper told a friend of his, who being also a friend of one of the customs officers, cautioned him.

Both of the officers advised me to go elsewhere till the trouble was over, but reflecting that I was their guest and so under obligations to them, and also that I was an officer of Uncle Sam, and was in duty bound to "uphold the government of the United States by land and sea, against foreign and domestic enemies" as had been specified in my oath of office, I decided to remain with them. Ross hunted up two of his old friends among the miners and told them he proposed to resist the attack till the last, and that if there should be any bloodshed he hoped the camp would treat him fairly, considering that he had simply been doing his duty. The miners offered to stay with us and help in the resistance, but as we knew their hearts were hardly in their offer of loyalty, we refused to let them stay. One of them, however, loaned his rifle to Wendling; and as he went to get it, a couple of forms behind the house jumped up and ran away. The other miner, who had also gone out for a moment, returned with the news that he had seen four men skulking behind the bank which lay in front of the house.

The plan of the smugglers and their friends, as Ross had learned it, was to come to the door of the cabin and knock. When the officer went to the door to open it, he would be covered with a revolver, and the second officer with another, and the whisky would be rolled out and over the bank into a boat which would convey it up the river into a new hiding-place. If the officers resisted they would be shot and the whisky taken just the same. The plan we determined upon was to leave the door unlocked, so that when the expected knock should come we would not have to go to the door to open it, but would call out "Come in" without stirring. I had my post on a box near the wall directly opposite the door, while Ross sat in the darkness close by the window, so that when the knocker should enter he would find the muzzles of repeating rifles levelled at him from two opposite directions, and be invited to drop his fire-arms and surrender. Wendling was in the other room watching the second door and window, but we did not expect the attack to be made there, since the smugglers must know very well that the whisky was in the officers' living-room, where we were.

Directly after we had taken our places a man came and stood twenty yards in front of the cabin in the dusk, and beckoned. Ross went out to him, and a long talk ensued, which ended by the officer returning. He said that the man had told him that we were three against many, and that they were bound to get the whisky anyway, since it was theirs and they would fight for it; so if Ross would simply yield without fighting it would save us. At the same time they would be willing to pay him a nice little sum as a plaster wherewith to heal his wounded dignity. Ross had replied that they had mistaken their man; whereupon he was informed that he must take the consequences. So he returned, and we waited with tense nerves, in momentary expectation of an attack, our eyes strained, our fingers on the triggers of our cocked rifles, our ears listening.

After an hour or more had passed, and no sound was heard, the suspense began to grow unbearable. Ross whispered to me, "If them fellers are coming I wish they'd hurry up, and not keep us waiting here all night." Shortly afterwards Wendling, crawling cautiously and silently around in the other room, knocked down from some shelf on the wall a pile of tin pans, which made a terrific rattle and bang; this upset our tightly-drawn nerves so that we laughed convulsively, trying to choke down our merriment so that it could not be heard. Still no noise from the outside, save that once we heard coughing behind the logs at the back of the building. Ross, peering through the window, saw now and then a shadowy form creeping along the bank in front; and Wendling, reconnoitring through the window in the other room, saw other figures passing around back of the house. And still no alarm. Sitting bolt upright on my box, I suddenly caught my head, which was in the act of falling forward—caught it with a jerk which brought my eyes wide open, and at the same time horror filled my soul—I was in danger of falling asleep! This frightened me so that I kept awake easily after that. So we waited till the morning grey brightened in the sky, when finally Ross remarked: "Well, there's no more danger, and I'm tired enough to sleep." We rolled ourselves in our blankets and dropped asleep without a moment's delay, not waking until the day was late and Goodrich and Schrader, just returning from the diggings, pounded on the door and asked for admission and a bite to eat.

Concerning the reasons why the raid was given up, there was much inner history that I never learned. I suspect that the miners who had offered to help us afterwards warned the smugglers, telling them how well we were prepared, and that this kept them from carrying out their plans.

The next night a grand ball was gottén up by the ladies of Circle City, and our bedroom in the customhouse—being one of the largest places available—was selected as the scene of the dance. I was requested to write the announcements of the ball, which I did, and stuck one up on each of the Companies' stores. They ran as follows:

SOCIAL DANCE.

There will be a SOCIAL DANCE
given by the ladies of CIRCLE CITY
Wednesday Eve. Aug. 19th,
At the residence of Mr. George Ross.
The supply of ice cream brought up on the
Arctic being exhausted, there will be
no collation.
No rubber boots allowed on the floor.
Dogs must be tied with ribbons in the anteroom.

After the notices were posted, one of the customs officers came to me in great perturbation concerning the regulation about rubber boots, saying that such a restriction would exclude many desirable and well-meaning gentlemen who would otherwise be able to attend.

The shavings were swept out of the room and our beds and other stuff cleared out. Wax candles were cut up and rubbed on the floor, and by dusk everything was in readiness. One of the trading companies donated the candles, which were stuck up around the room to the extent of nearly a dozen, and furnished a brilliant illumination. The services of a pock-marked vagabond who was employed around a saloon and dance-house was secured as director of the affair, and two miners just in from the gulches (they had taken only one change of clothes to the diggings and had not had time to change them after coming back before going to the dance, furnished the orchestra, playing very acceptably on guitar and fiddle. The music was all classical,—Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay or the Irish washerwoman occupying most of the time. Each of the players was so enthusiastic in his art that he often entirely forgot his companion, and would be fiddling away at the closing spasms of Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay, with perspiring zeal, when his more rapid partner had finished this tune and was merrily galloping through

"Wuz ye iver inside of an Irishman's shanty?
Wid salt an' peraties an' iverything planty,
A three-legged stool an' a table to match,
And the door of the shanty unlocks wid a latch!"

The pock-marked director yelled out "*Swing* your pardners. *Ladies* to the left. *Forward* and back! *Alleman left!* etc.," loud above the squeak of the stringed instruments. The couples gyrated in eccentric curves around in obedience to the cries; the candles flickered in the draft from the open door; and a row of miners too bashful to dance, or who could find no partners, sat on boxes close to the wall, hunched up their legs and spit tobacco-juice, until the middle of the floor was a sort of an island. In short, it was the most brilliant affair Circle City had ever witnessed; even the Indians who crowded around the open door and peered in over one another's heads murmured in admiration, and all agreed that it was a "*haioo* time", which is equivalent to saying a rip-roaring time. This was not the first dance held in the camp. The small but powerful contingent of ladies of adventure held nightly dances, but this was the first where the ladies were respectable.

We were hard put to it for finery. The dancer of our party, having, as we explained to him, to bear in a way the brunt of the social duties for us all, bought a new pair of blue overalls, much too large for him; these he turned up at the bottom, and braced up mightily, so that they covered many shortcomings; then he bought a green and yellow abomination of a necktie, which had been designed to catch the heathen fancy of the natives, plastered his hair down, and worried the tangles out of his beard. After this he was the beau of the evening, the gayest of the gay, being snubbed by only one woman, and she of doubtful reputation, as we consolingly reminded him.

The men in general wore the most varied costumes, high boots being the prevailing style, though even the rubber boots I had been so near forbidding were seen; then one might notice the Indian moccasins, and the sealskin makalok, which had been brought up from the Eskimos on the lower Yukon. Flannel shirts without coat or vests were the rule, for the night was warm. Here and there was a corduroy coat, or a mackinaw checked with red and green squares four inches across, but the wearers of them suffered for their vanity. In striking and almost ridiculous contrast to this picturesque attire was the black cutaway suit and polished shoes of the baker who had just arrived on a Yukon steamer from St. Michael's.

After midnight we had cake, which the ladies had brought with them, and considering the fact that they had so little material for cooking, the variety and excellence were remarkable. Underneath the festive board which covered the bed still lay concealed the two kegs of whisky which we had watched over the night before. It was at a late hour (to adopt country newspaper phraseology) that the company broke up, loud in their praises of the success of the fête, and returned to their respective homes. We then rolled our blankets out upon the waxed floor, and lay down for another night.

The same day a river steamer had arrived in Circle City from the lower Yukon, bringing our trunks to us, which we had sent around by water from Seattle. These were well filled with a goodly outfit for the winter, for we had expected that our work would take us two seasons. We had, however, gotten on twice as well as we had expected, and already saw the end of our task ahead, so there was nothing to hinder us from going out this same fall. The freight on our three trunks from Seattle was one hundred and eighty dollars, and we did not feel justified in expending a like sum to carry them back. We therefore determined to sell our things, and the day after the party I wrote out notices announcing an auction to be held in the room where we had danced.

Wendling volunteered to act as auctioneer, provided he were allowed to work in as part of our effects several hundred pounds of tobacco which he had brought up as a speculation. At seven o'clock we started in, having borrowed a pair of gold-scales for the sake of transacting the financial part of the business, for almost the sole currency of the camp was gold dust. Not being ourselves accustomed to the delicate operation of weighing, we persuaded some of the miners to do it for us, so that there should be no question as to fairness. At eight the miners began leaving and we were told that a miners' meeting had been called, so we adjourned for an hour, and attended the gathering.

The miners' meeting was the sole legislative, judiciary and executive body in these little republics. To settle any question whatever, any one had the right to call such a council, which brought the issue to a summary close. This one was held in the open air close to the river bank in front of the Company's store. The miners flocked together and conversed in groups. Nobody knew who had called the meeting or why; but presently some grew impatient, remarking: "Let's have the meeting. Who's for chairman?"

One man answered: "What's the matter with Sandy Jim for chairman? Here he is, just in from the diggings! Come over here, Jim!"

"Second the motion, somebody. Any body object to Sandy Jim?" said the first speaker. "Climb up on the box, Sandy, my boy."

Sandy Jim was a slender, blonde young man with quiet manners, and a style of speech which told of a good education. He mounted the box in the centre of the crowd, and having thus obtained a commanding position, he began, with correct parliamentary methods, to bring about order. Having requested silence, he inquired who had called the meeting. A man who acted as town clerk or some similar officer in the miners' vague system of government, explained that he had issued the call, to inform the miners that some one had settled upon a piece of land that had been set aside for town purposes, and, in spite of warnings to the contrary, was proceeding to erect a log house upon it; and that the tent temporarily occupied by the individual mentioned was already pitched upon the lot. As an officer of the camp he had felt in duty bound to call a meeting and let the boys decide what was to be done. Instantly there was a rattle of contradictory suggestions, everybody addressing everybody else, and forgetting to turn to the chairman. Finally a tall man with a heavy black beard mounted the box and addressed the meeting, arguing coldly and logically that the person had acted in defiance of the miners' meeting, which was the only law they had; and proposing that he be fined, and in case he resisted further, put in a boat and set floating down the Yukon. There was a general murmur of approval, and the chairman, putting the question to a vote, found a fairly unanimous verdict in favor of the speaker's suggestion.

"Before I appoint a committee," said the chairman, "the meeting should know who the person is who has to be dealt with, and I will ask the gentleman who called the meeting to give the information."

The clerk of the camp elbowed his way forward a little. "I've been trying to get a word in for a long time," he said. "I don't think we ought to be so hard in this case. You all know the person—it's Black Kitty. She's a woman, even if she *is* black and a fighter, and she's alone and working for a living. I move we go it easy."

Amid another buzz the tall bearded man got up and remarked: "That's different. I don't think any one wanted to quarrel with a woman, and a black one at that." This was only his way of expressing it, for he certainly did not mean that he would rather have quarrelled with a white woman. "Anyhow, there's plenty of land for public purposes out there in the brush, and I move an amendment that we let Kitty alone!"

In defiance of all parliamentary usage, this amendment was accepted with a chorus of approval by the crowd, which, satisfied with itself, scattered almost before the chairman could make himself heard, sanctioning and proclaiming valid the last expression of opinion.

Most of the miners returned to our cabin, where the auction began again, and lasted till twelve o'clock, by which time we had sold nearly everything we cared to, at prices a little above cost in Seattle. Wendling also succeeded in disposing of a hundred pounds of his tobacco, putting up lots every now and then. Some miners expressed surprise to Ross that we should use so much tobacco, and Ross winked and put his finger on his nose and said, "You don't know the inside, that's all. See that little feller over there?" indicating me. "That little feller chews a pound a day. Yes, sir! He eats it sometimes."

The next morning we weighed out our gold dust and found it some twenty-five dollars more than we had any record of, from which we inferred that the miners who had so kindly superintended the weighing of the various sums paid in had been a little generous, and always given full weight. When we got to San Francisco, and presented our gold dust at the mint, where it was weighed accurately, we received several dollars more for it than we made it from our final weighing; so it appears that the Yukon miner's currency is none of the most accurate. Stories were told around camp, of barkeepers who panned the sawdust on their floor and made good wages at it; and it was alleged that one had a strip of carpet on his counter, into which he let fall a trifle of gold dust every time he took a pinch for a drink of whisky, and at the end of the day, by taking up his carpet and shaking it, he had a nice little sum over his day's earnings.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MYNOOK CREEK DIGGINGS.

THE next day, the 21st of August, we loaded up the Skookum again, and dropped away from Circle City with the current. The customs officers were short of rice, but they sent a pair of old slippers flying after us as we moved away; and several of the ladies who had been at the dance stood on the bank and waved us adieu. Soon the river broadened out, with many channels flowing amid a maze of low wooded islands. This was the beginning of the great Yukon Flats, which stretch in dreary monotony for so many miles below Circle City.

The wind blew strong, with gusts of rain, in the morning, and increased to a gale which lasted nearly all day. The proper channel was difficult to determine, and we were often sucked into some little channel or slough (pronounced "sloo"), only to find our way back again, after a long circuit, to the larger body of water, at a place near where we had left it. No hills were visible in any direction—nothing but the waste of waters, the sandspits, and the level wooded islands and banks. At night we reached Fort Yukon, a trading post, which is situated at the junction of the Porcupine with the Yukon; we had made the distance from Circle City, estimated at about eighty miles, in sixteen hours. So bewildering are the various channels here that one would hardly suspect that any stream entered the Yukon, and the current is so varied and sluggish that one might easily attempt to ascend the Porcupine, having the impression that he was still descending the Yukon—a delusion that would be dispelled after the first few miles.

Like other so-called "Forts" in the Alaskan country, Fort Yukon was simply a rough log building inhabited by one white man, who had a scanty stock of very poor provisions, such as flour and tea, to exchange for skins with the natives. Around the building the Indians had made their camp, as usual, a trading-post being always the nucleus of a dirty and foul-smelling congregation of natives. From one Indian we bought a whitefish, and on his presenting it to us whole, we motioned him to clean it; he did so, laying the entrails carefully on a board. He wished tea in exchange for it, and not being experienced in native trading, we gave him what we afterwards learned was ten or twelve times the usual price. We had the best English breakfast tea, and he was at first doubtful at this, having seen only the cheap black tea always sold to the natives; but he was vastly pleased at the quantity, and, laughing delightedly, proceeded to "treat" his friends on the occasion of his good fortune, by handing around the raw entrails of the fish, which they divided and ate without further ceremony.

Not liking to sleep within reach of the Indian dogs, who are very dangerous enemies to one's bacon, we dropped down the river half a mile below the post and made camp in a spruce grove—a beautiful spot, cool, and free from mosquitoes.

The next day we were still in the flats. There was a high wind blowing and the sky was spotted with curious clouds. Some were like cauliflowers in form; others were funnel-shaped; and still others were dark, with long black tentacles of rain. Whenever these tentacles passed over the river in a direction against the current, an ugly chop sea was the result, and our boat, stout dory though she was, shipped water in some of these places.

Floating down through the network of channels we suddenly ran hard upon a sand-bar, and it took a couple of hours' work to get us off, for as soon as we were lodged the sand which the Yukon waters carry began settling round the boat and banking it in, making it the hardest work imaginable to move it. While we were tugging and groaning in our efforts, a steamer—the Arctic—came down the river behind us, and being steered by experienced Indian pilots, struck the right channel only a short distance from us and floated past triumphantly. The deck was swarming with miners who were bound for St. Michael's, and they made many jocose remarks at our expense, offering to take word to our friends, and do other favors for us. We said nothing, though we fumed inwardly. Finally we succeeded in getting free, and floated off. Some time afterwards we saw behind us what appeared to be the smoke of another steamer; but when we stopped for lunch the craft caught up with us, and proved to be an ordinary open boat like our own, but with a Yukon stove made of sheet iron set up in it, whereon the solitary passenger cooked his dinner while he floated.

In the afternoon we caught sight of a bona fide steamer ahead of us, and as we came steadily closer, it seemed as if she must be stopping; soon we recognized the Arctic, and saw that the crew and all the passengers were laboring excitedly in many ways, trying to get the boat off the sand-bar on which she was stuck. We ran close by her, for there was water enough for our little boat, although the rapid deposit from the river had built up a bank to the surface of the water on one side of the steamer. We were sorry for these men, who were in a hurry to get to St. Michael's, and so on home; at the same time we could not resist the temptation to return to them their greetings of the morning, and offer to take letters to their friends. They did not seem to be so much amused at the joke as they had been in the morning—probably because they had heard it before.

We were several days floating through this monotonous part of the river. There were always the same banks of silt, from which portions, undercut by the current, were continually crashing into the stream; these were immediately taken up and hurried along by the current to form part of the vast deposit of mud which the Yukon has built up at its mouth, and which has filled up the Behring sea until it is shallow and dangerous. On the higher banks, which were forty feet or so above the river (it was then low water), spruce and other trees were growing, and as the soil which bore them was undercut, they too dropped into the river and started on their long journey to the sea. Along the vast tundra at the Yukon mouth, and the treeless shores of the Behring sea, the natives depend entirely upon these wandered trees for their fuel. The quantity brought down every year is enormous, for the stream is continually working its way sidewise, and cutting out fresh ground.

Everywhere we noticed the effects of the ice which comes grinding down the river in the spring. The trees had been girdled by the ice and were dying, the underbrush cut down, the earth plowed up, and occasionally there were piles of pebbles where a grounded cake had melted and deposited its burden.

We used to camp on the gravel bars mostly, to avoid the mosquitoes; but every now and then a night was cool and even frosty, and the mosquitoes and gnats, after starting in their assault, were gradually numbed, and their buzzing grew fainter and fainter till it disappeared. When we felt such nights coming on, we camped in the spruce groves on the higher banks, built roaring fires and sat by them comfortably and smoked,

THE BREAK-UP OF THE ICE ON THE YUKON.

looking out on the smooth river with the dark even fringe of trees between it and the sky with its snapping stars; and for the first time on our trip we began to have some of the pleasures which usually come to the camper-out.

We passed Indian hunting and fishing camps occasionally, and once a solitary white man engaged in cutting wood for the river steamers. The natives seemed always to have plenty to eat, and we frequently obtained from them, fish, duck, moose, and berries. As we passed a camp the inhabitants would put out in their tiny birch-bark canoes, if we did not stop; and, overtaking us with ease, would hold up for purchase such articles as they had. The berries were in native dishes of hewn wood, or of birch-bark tied with wooden thongs, and were so quaint that we took them home as curiosities.

After several days in the Flats, we saw—when the clouds lifted after a prolonged rainstorm—that the course of the river was apparently barred by low mountains, level-topped, with occasional higher peaks rising above the general level, but all with smooth and rounded outlines. As we drew nearer we saw a narrow valley cutting through the mountains, and into this the river ran. Just before entering, we found a trading post, Fort Hamlin by name, and from the trader, who was the only white man here, we each bought a pair of Eskimo water-boots, made of the skin of the makalok or hair seal, soaked in oil. We had long ago worn out the most of our civilized foot-gear, and were obliged to adopt the native styles. These Eskimo boots often have soles of walrus, and yet they are too thin for walking over stones, so they are made very large, and dried grass is put into the bottom; the foot, too, is wrapped in as many thicknesses of cloth or skins as possible, and thus is protected against bruises and against the cold of the severest winter weather.

Leaving Fort Hamlin, we floated down through picturesque hills, on the sides of which the birch was beginning to yellow. Another day brought us to Mynook Creek, of which we had heard at Circle City as likely to be a good gold producer. At the mouth of the creek we found the temporary camps of a few prospectors, who were on their way up to stake out claims. There were also numerous Indians encamped in the vicinity—

true savages, with very few words of English among them, "yes" "no" and "steamboat" making up almost their entire vocabulary.

A sort of chief among them was a Mynook, a half-breed with more Indian than white in his features. It was after him that the creek had been named (or rather renamed, for it had formerly been known as the Klanakakat or Klanachargut, the native name); he had been the first to discover gold, and was engaged in working a claim with a crew of natives, notwithstanding the fact that Indians have, according to our somewhat peculiar laws, no legal right to stake mines. He was a good-looking fellow with a fair knowledge of English, which he was very proud to air, especially the "cuss-words," which he introduced into conversation very gravely and irrelevantly. He said when he got dust enough he was going to "San Francisco," that being to him a general name for the world of the white men. He had always hired natives to work his claims, although he admitted that they did not work nearly as well as white people; they would labor only until they had a little money ahead, and then would quit until it was all spent, although it might be the very busiest season; and if perchance a steamboat was reported on the river, the gang to a man would drop pick and shovel and trot down the trail to the mouth of the creek, there to stand open-eyed and open-mouthed, gazing at the smoking monster which held them with a fascination stronger than even Mynook's displeasure.

We camped on the beach, and made preparations the next morning to visit the diggings. We separated, as usual, each taking a different route, and each hiring an Indian to accompany him and carry his pack. The first Indian I hired had on a new gingham jumper, and a sly smile which gave an impression that his subsequent actions did not belie. He wanted to be paid before starting, and when this was refused said he was hungry, and was so weak that he could not walk without food. So we administered to him a substantial breakfast, after which he disappeared and never could be found again. Soon another Indian presented himself—a particularly wicked looking fellow, with red bulging eyes that gave one a sort of shiver to look at him. He wanted to go with me, and I hired him, having no other choice. Then he too explained by gestures, that he was starving and must have some breakfast to keep him strong on his long walk; whereupon I explained, also by gestures, that the first Indian had gotten the second Indian's breakfast already, and that, having delivered the breakfast, the rest was no affair of mine (I having carried out my share of the transaction as was fitting), so that the only possible subject for discussion lay between him and the first Indian.

He seemed to be impressed with the logic of this, shouldered his pack and trotted off meekly enough. As we started, the smoke of a steamboat became visible down the river; the natives raised the excited cry of "shteemboot" and my guide showed signs of sitting down to wait for it to come and go before he should proceed with his journey. However, a few studiously stern looks, accompanied by prodding in his ribs with a stick, started him along the trail, to which he kept faithfully after that. This led through a thick growth of alder brush, across brooks, but always kept in the valley of the main stream, on each side of which were hills with the bare rocks peering from among the yellowing foliage.

After three hours' tramp, we turned up a little side valley, and soon came upon a claim that was being worked by a number of miners. This was the only active one on this creek, and with the exception of Mynook's claim on another small branch, the only one being exploited on Mynook Creek as a whole. Several other men, however, had staked claims and were engaged in building log cabins, preparatory to the winter's prospecting.

Here I dismissed my Indian, telling him by signs to come back again on the next day. During the two days he and I were out together, we did not utter an articulate sound in trying to communicate with one another. It was of no use, for he could not understand the English any better than I Yukon. So in this case I looked at him fixedly and silently, and pointed to the miner's cabin, laid my head on my hand and shut my eyes, signifying that I intended to sleep there. Then with my finger I followed in the sky the course the sun would take on the following day, halting at a point midway in the afternoon; then, pointing to him, I imitated the motion of a man carrying a pack, and with a rapid movement of the finger indicated the trail back to the mouth of the creek; finally with a comprehensive gesture I gave him to understand that he might do as he pleased in the meantime. He disappeared immediately, coming back at night to beg for food from my hosts; failing in that, he bivouacked at a camp-fire, with a few other Indians who were working on the creek, in front of the miner's log cabin, and before we were up in the morning had disappeared again. At exactly the appointed time the next day, however, he returned, ready for the harness, as red-eyed, dumb and vicious-looking as ever.

The sign language of all these Yukon Indians is wonderfully clever; it is also very complicated, and I have seen two natives conversing fluently behind a trader's back, using their faces and hands in rapid movements which, however, conveyed no idea to the uninitiated observer as to their meaning. Some of their signs which I have understood are remarkable for the clever selection of a distinguishing characteristic to designate a given object. For example, a white man was expressed by stroking the chin as if it were bearded. In this wild country razors were unknown and even scissors a rarity, so that all white men wore thick and usually bushy beards, while the natives had very little or no hair on their faces. Since I wore spectacles, I was described in sign language first by a gesture of stroking the beard, which indicated that I was a white man, and then by bending the thumb and forefinger in a circle, and peering through this circle, thereby sufficiently identifying me among others.

At the cabin where I spent the night was a man who had been on the exploring expedition of Lieutenant Allen some years before, when that young officer accomplished such a splendid journey under such great difficulties, through a barren and unknown country, ascending the Copper River, descending the Tanana, exploring the Koyukuk, and finally returning to St. Michael's by way of the Yukon. On learning that I was in the government service, this man insisted on my becoming his guest. He slept and ate in a little log cabin of his own, where he had a bed built of hewn wood, which was pretty exactly proportioned to his own length and breadth. By a little careful manipulation, however, we both managed to stretch out on it and as the night was frosty and our covering none of the thickest, neither of us objected to the proximity of the other, although we were so crowded that when one turned over the other had to do so at the same time. In the morning my "pardner," as he might fitly be called, had a savory breakfast well under way when I opened my eyes.

After our meal my host went to his work, while I undertook a journey a little further up the main stream to a tributary gulch. Here one man was engaged in prospecting—Oliver Miller, one of the remarkable prospectors of early Alaskan times. He had been in this region many years already, always prospecting, often lucky in finding, but never resting or stopping to read the benefits of his discoveries, and always pushing restlessly onwards towards new and unexplored fields. In the early eighties he had been among the first who had come to the Forty Mile district from Stewart River and the other affluents of the Yukon above the international boundary. He discovered the creek still known by his name—Miller Creek,—which really lies at the headwaters of Sixty Mile Creek, but is separated only by a low dividing ridge from the gold-producing gulches at the head of Forty Mile Creek, and is therefore usually reckoned as a part of the Forty Mile district.

Miller Creek was one of the richest creeks in the district and was soon staked out by eager prospectors; but Miller himself got restless, and saying the place was getting too crowded for him, sold his claim one day for what he could get, and investing the amount in "grub" and outfit, started out over the hills alone, prospecting. In the Birch Creek district, which was discovered later, he found gold again, but as soon as miners came in he sold out and went further. Now after many wanderings he was in Mynook Creek, and it was characteristic of the man that instead of being industriously engaged in washing gold in one of the already prospected tributaries nearer the Yukon, he had vanished into the brush, out of reach of the sound of pick and shovel, and was nosing around among the rocks and panning gravel.

According to directions, I left the trail, which indeed ran no further, and followed the bank of the main stream, working my way through the brush, till I came to a little brook, then went up along this nearly to where it emerged from a rocky gorge in the hills. At this point I came upon a grassy nook under the birches, where a fire was smouldering; and under a tree a man's heavy blankets were spread on a bed of green boughs, as if he had just stepped out. A couple of kettles were standing near the fire, and a coat was lying on the ground, while an axe was sticking in the tree above the blankets. There was no tent or any superfluities whatever, and it was evident that this camping outfit was one of those which a man may take on his back and wander over hill and dale with. Not hearing or seeing any sign of life, I sat down and waited, but no one appearing after half an hour, I began following a man's trail from the camp up the gorge, tracing him by the bent grass and broken twigs. After having gone a short distance, I heard the thumping of a pick on a rocky wall in front and above me, and gave a hail. The prospector came down very slowly, his manner not being so much that of a man who was sorry to see one—on the contrary, he was pleasant and cordial—as that of one who is reluctantly dragged away from a favorite employment. We went back to his camp under the birches and as it was now noon he invited me to dinner with him.

It was a sunny day, and the grass was warm and bright, with the shadow of the delicate leaves falling upon it; the mosquitoes had disappeared in this period of frosty nights and chilly days, so that the sylvan camp was ideal. Some boiled beans, boiled dried apples, and bread, baked before an open fire, constituted the meal; yet I remember to this day the flavor of each article, so delicious they appeared to my sharp appetite. Miller was embarrassed somewhat about dishes. He had by good luck two kettle covers, which served as plates for us, and he was, he explained, in the habit of using his sheath-knife to manage the rest, for he had neither table-knife, fork, nor spoon. I produced my own sheath-knife and assured him that I was born with it in my mouth, so to speak, and we set to eating cheerfully.

For a professional recluse, I found Miller very cordial and communicative. He travelled alone, he told me, not because he would not have been glad of company, but because it was hard to find any one to go with him, and almost impossible that two "pardners," even when at first agreeable, should remain very long without quarrelling; so he had decided, as the simplest solution, to carry out his ideas alone. He was in the habit of exploring the most remote parts of the territory, searching for minerals. He had tramped over the mountains between the Yukon and the Tanana, back and forth; and had been a thousand miles up the Koyukuk, to where it headed in a high range, climbing which, he had looked out upon the Arctic ocean. On returning down the river, he had been knocked out of his boat by a "sweeper" (a log which extends out from a bank over a stream, two or three feet above the water). The current was so rapid where he met with the accident that when he rose to the surface his boat was some distance ahead of him. He struck out swimming to catch up with it, but, as if animated with a perverse living spirit, the boat moved off on a swifter current toward the centre of the river. Soon he was in danger of being benumbed in the icy water, and he was exhausted from his efforts, yet he knew if he should swim to the banks and lose his boat he would eventually perish in the wilderness, without resource and hundreds of miles from the nearest human being. So he swam desperately, and when on the point of giving up and sinking, a check in the current ahead slackened the speed of the boat so that by an effort he was able to reach it and grasp the gunwale. But it was some time before he gathered strength enough to pull himself aboard.

The history of the prospectors in any new country, especially in Alaska, would be a record of intensely interesting pioneering. Unfortunately these men leave no record, and their hardships, lonely exploring tours and daring deeds, performed with a heroism so simple that it seems almost comical, have no chronicler. They penetrate the deserts, they climb the mountains, they ascend the streams, they dare with the crudest preparation the severest danger of nature. Some of them die, others return to civilization and become sailors or car-conductors or janitors; but they are of the stuff that keeps the nation alive. By that I do not mean the false or imitation prospector, who has no courage or patience, but only the greed of gold. Thousands of such poured into Alaska after the Klondike boom, and many of them turned back at the first sight of Chilkoot Pass, which is nothing to frighten a strong boy of twelve. Many more got enough of Alaska in floating down the Yukon, and kept on straight to St. Michael's, scarcely stopping in any of the mining regions; thereby benefiting the transportation companies greatly, and adding much to the territory's sudden apparent prosperity. But before the Klondike rush nearly all the Alaskans were of the hardy true pioneer type I write about.

In the afternoon I returned, and finding my Indian punctually on hand at the appointed time, we went back to the Yukon together.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LOWER YUKON.

THE next day we broke camp, and floating down the river, soon entered the main range of the Rampart Mountains. They were not high, but picturesque, and the lower parts and the valleys were gay with green and gold. It was a perfect day, cool and clear. We stopped for the night below the so-called rapids, which at this time of low water were hardly noticeable. An Indian came to our camp from his village across the river, and we traded a can of condensed milk with him for a silver salmon. I got into his little narrow birch canoe, and managed to paddle it with the feather-like paddle, thanks to my experience in rowing a racing-shell; but it required infinite care in balancing. I could not help admiring the ease with which the Indian managed the delicate boat when he left us for home again, and wondering how these people catch salmon out of canoes like these.

All this day and the next we passed many Indian villages, made up of white tents, with red dried salmon hung up on frames in front. Although these natives are classed as Indians, (belonging to the group of Athabascans) and although they show certain traits of physiognomy like them, yet in their general nature they are entirely different. Unlike the stoical Sioux or Arapahoe of the United States, these people are childlike and open in their manners. They chatter freely in their own language, whether it is understood or not; they are anx-

A YUKON CANOE.

ious to give and get information; and they seize the slightest excuse for a joke to giggle convulsively. They are fine boatmen, and good hunters and fishermen. All along the river could be seen their traps of stakes, set in some eddy near a bend of the river, and in the early frosty mornings the squaws would come down to the traps in their canoes,—which are broader than those of the men, and managed by a wider paddle—propelling them swiftly and rhythmically along, crooning a song. They are an intelligent, good-humored people, already a little

INDIAN FISH-TRAPS.

spoiled in their manners and ideas by contact with whites who were hardly fitted to teach the untutored savage. Yet they are on the whole far from disagreeable people to deal with, and although their habits did not always seem up to the civilized standard, yet in contrast to the Eskimos whom we saw further down the river, they were models of cleanliness. There is no lack of variety in their faces, and in one camp I saw a woman whose dark beauty would have ornamented the finest drawing-room. Whether or not she had some share of white blood I do not know.

These Indians, as a rule, have no chief, but live in the most complete independence, the only authority over them being that of the *shaman* or medicine man, who attains his ascendency by his cleverness in duping others to believe he has supernatural gifts, such as prophecy. It is the custom for any one who aspires to high position to make prediction as to the weather, when the next steamboat will arrive, and so on. When his predictions become true frequently, he gradually obtains influence.

Great travellers are the Alaskan Indians too, and at a trading post along this part of the Yukon one may see, besides the Yukon Indians, others from the Koyukuk, the Tanana, and even the Kuskokwim; but one rarely sees Eskimos, who are not such great wanderers, and when they make voyages visit only the regions peopled by their own race. Those Indians who live on the flats of the river frequently go to the mountains a long distance off to hunt. Dr. Dall, in his "Alaska and its Resources," gives the following translation of a song which he heard a Koyukuk woman singing to her infant.

"The wind blows over the Yukon.
My husband hunts the deer on the Koyukun mountains.
Ahmi, Ahmi, sleep, little one.

"There is no wood for the fire.
The stone axe is broken, my husband carries the other.
Where is the sun-warmth? Hid in the dam of the beaver, waiting the springtime?
Ahmi, Ahmi, sleep, little one, wake not!

"Look not for ukali,[1] old woman.
Long since the cache was emptied, and the crow does not light on the ridge-pole!
Long since my husband departed. Why does he wait on the mountains?
Ahmi, Ahmi, sleep, little one, softly.

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[1] Dried salmon.

"Where is my own?
Does he lie starving on the hillside? Why does he linger?
Comes he not soon, I will seek him among the mountains.
Ahmi, Ahmi, sleep, little one, sleep.

"The crow has come, laughing.
His beak is red, his eyes glisten, the false one.
'Thanks for a good meal to Kuskokala the shaman.
On the sharp mountain quietly lies your husband.'
Ahmi, Ahmi, sleep, little one, wake not.

"Twenty deer's tongues tied to the pack on his shoulders;
Not a tongue in his mouth to call to his wife with.
Wolves, foxes, and ravens are tearing for morsels.
Tough and hard are the sinews; not so the child in your bosom.
Ahmi, Ahmi, sleep, little one, wake not!

"Over the mountain slowly staggers the hunter.
Two bucks' thighs on his shoulders, with bladders of fat between them.
Twenty deer's tongues in his belt. Go gather wood, old woman!
Off flew the crow,—liar, cheat, and deceiver!
Wake, little sleeper, wake, and call to your father!

"He brings you back fat, marrow, and venison fresh from the mountains.
Tired and worn, he has carved a toy of the deer's horn,
While he was sitting and waiting long for the deer on the hillside.
Wake, and see the crow, hiding himself from the arrow!
Wake, little one, wake, for here is your father."

Although we saw fish in front of all the tents and apparent contentment in every face, yet we were told that the catch had not been nearly so great as usual that summer, and that there must inevitably be much suffering during the winter. "Yes," said Mynook, at Mynook Creek, philosophically, "Goin' be hard winter; tink old people all die." We asked him why just the old people, and he explained that the old people had not been able to gather so much provisions as the young and vigorous ones, and would therefore sooner starve. We told him that in our country we cared for the old first, and he seemed to think such a custom very unjust, observing that the old who had lived should die if there was any famine, and make room for the younger ones who could live yet a long time if they could get food. It is starvation, one may add, which keeps the Indian population of the whole Alaskan interior within very meagre limits.

On the 3d of September we came to the mouth of the Tanana, a large tributary which enters the Yukon on the left side; the country around its mouth is low, and the river itself splits into many channels, forming a delta. On the bank of the Yukon opposite the mouth of the Tanana we found a trading post with two white men and a host of Indians. When we landed at the store we were met by the Indians, the white men having not yet observed us. The first was evidently a shaman or medicine man, a copper-colored old fellow with cross eyes and a cunning wrinkle around his mouth. He ceremoniously pulled off his buckskin gloves before offering his hand to shake; then pointing his finger to the sky he began a long speech in his own language, with many gestures. We all listened very gravely, and when he got through and looked at me with an air of self-satisfaction and triumph, I placed both hands on my stomach, and rolled my eyes, then thumbed my nose at him, and finally began to quote to him the immortal soliloquy of Hamlet "To be or not to be," with much emphasis and many variations. Everybody listened with evident delight, especially the shaman, and when we were through they conducted us up to the trading post. An old fellow was smoking a curiously carved wooden pipe, which filled the soul of one of our party with the desire to obtain it, since it seemed such a remarkable bit of native work. He offered five dollars for it as a starter, and the old fellow, astounded but willing to accept the gifts of the gods without questioning, handed over the pipe with an alacrity that made Goodrich examine it a little more before parting with his money. On the bottom of the bowl was stamped in the wood "Smith & Co., New York," and on closer inspection it was evident that the apparent carving was in reality pressed, and that the pipe was worth in the neighborhood of twenty-five cents in the States.

We were welcomed by the trader, and after a lunch with him floated down the river about eight miles to the mission below. There our eyes were delighted by a neat little building with a belfry and bell, and actually two dormer windows. It was the work of the pioneer Mike Hess, from whom the stream entering the Yukon above Mynook creek had been named. The missionary was absent in a parochial call five hundred miles away, but his wife and child and a nurse were there. The missionary published the only paper on the Yukon at that time; it appeared once a year, and consisted of four small pages, printed on a hand-press. The items were from all over the country, and many of them were very interesting and amusing.

From here we kept on travelling with the current down the Yukon, helping our speed by continuous rowing. There being three of us, "tricks" of one hour were arranged, so each man steered for an hour, rowed an hour, and then sat in the stern for an hour, regarding the landscape and making notes. It grew so chilly that often the time for resting was hardest to endure, for the skin would cool and the teeth would chatter even with all the clothes we could get on, and we would be glad to get a little vigorous exercise again. Storms were frequent, and we often had the pleasure of sitting in the driving rain all day long. We covered over our outfit as well as we could and even rigged up a sort of awning of sail-cloth on a frame-work of boughs, which kept the rain off the steersman, while the man who was resting crawled under a tarpaulin, and the oarsman rowed and got wet; so that under these conditions the position of steersman was most coveted. The wind blew with such violence that sometimes we took water over the bow and stern of our boat, and the steerman had to exert skill to keep from swamping. When the weather was clear, however, it was cool, and we enjoyed life more at such times than we had before done.

To wake up on a gloriously bright morning, in a tent pitched beneath spruce trees, and to look out lazily and sleepily for a moment from the open side of the tent, across the dead camp-fire of the night before, to the river, where the light of morning rests and perhaps some early-rising

IN A TENT BENEATH SPRUCE TREES.

native is gliding in his birch canoe; to go to the river and freshen one's self with the cold water, and yell exultingly to the gulls and hell-divers, in the very joy of living; or to wake at night, when you have rolled in your blankets in the frost-stricken dying grass without a tent, and to look up through the leaves above to the dark sky and the flashing stars, and hear far off the call of a night bird or the howl of a wolf: this is the poetry, the joy of a wild and roving existence, which cannot come too often. No one need look for such moments during mosquito time in Alaska. But the pests were over now, and men and animals who had been fighting them all summer rested and drew deep draughts of peace, and strengthened themselves for the stinging cold of the winter, likewise hard on the temper and on the vital powers.

In our downward journey we passed close by mountains whose tops were beginning to be snow-covered, and were higher than those of the Rampart Mountains, which we had crossed above the Tanana; yet they were further from the river, with level country between. Leaving these behind we came to flats similar to the great Yukon flats above the Ramparts, but not so extensive. Here the river split into many channels, enclosing low green islands. The clay banks were fifty or a hundred feet high, and as we followed the current it took us against the side which it was engaged in cutting away. We had to avoid getting too close, for one never knew when a portion, undermined by the stream, would topple over with a tremendous splash; and if such a mass should strike the boat it would bear it to the bottom of the river and bury it so deeply and easily that when the dust of the fall should clear away, the circles on the water would be as regular as usual.

The banks showed on the upper parts, deposits of black peat, twenty or thirty feet thick, and it was evident that the accumulations are going on at the surface yet. Alaska is, like other Arctic regions, densely covered with moss, which grows alike in the swamps and on the steep hillsides; and the successive generations of mosses, one rearing itself on the remains of the others, bring about in time a deposit of peat which one can find nearly everywhere, if he digs down. It is well known that such vegetable accumulations, after having been transformed into peat, may by further change become a lignite or sort of brown coal, and when much altered by the heat or pressure attending the uneasy movement of the earth's crust may even become anthracite. In many regions the crust, apparently still, is in reality constantly moving, although so slowly that we do not notice it; yet in the course of ages the most stupendous changes have been brought about. We are accustomed to picture coal as originating in tropical swamps of the carboniferous period, with enormous trees bearing leaves many feet long, and bullfrogs as big as men squatting in the background, while the air is so heavily laden with carbonic acid that it would put out a candle; but here, at the Arctic Circle, the formation of coal is evidently going on rapidly, and future generations may derive benefit from it.

Beds of vegetable matter belonging to a past age are abundant all along the Yukon, but the coal is as yet only a black shiny lignite, for it has not been altered much; and leaves found in it show that the vegetation of the period when the beds accumulated was not far different from what it is to-day, and had nothing to do with gigantic tadpoles and malaria.

One of the most interesting of the high clay bluffs which we passed lies on the left-hand side of the river, not far below the Tanana. It has been called by some early travellers the Palisades, and this name appears on the map, but the miners and traders know it by the name of the Boneyard, from the fact that there are buried in the silts near the top (which is about two hundred feet high) many bones of large animals, which come down to the river as portions of the bluff are undermined and fall. We stopped at this place, and, slumping through the mud to the foot of the bluff, we came across the tusk of a mammoth, which probably weighed over a hundred and fifty pounds. It was as thick as a man's leg at its larger end, but the whole of it was evidently not there. Further on we found a smaller tusk with the end worn off as if the animal had been using it severely for some purpose. Afterwards we saw other bones,—leg bones, fragments of the backbone, etc.,—in great abundance. Our little boat was too small to carry these gigantic relics, but we preserved a huge molar tooth from a mammoth, measuring several inches across, and we sawed off portions of one of the tusks.

The extinct hairy elephant, or mammoth, inhabited Alaska at a time previous to the memory of man, yet not very ancient, geologically speaking. Remains of these animals are also abundant in Arctic America and Siberia. It was at first supposed that the climate was tropical when they existed, since it is well known that the elephant is a native of hot countries, and the bones are almost exactly like those of the elephants of the tropics. The discovery of some of these remains in the River Lena in Siberia was one of the most interesting of modern scientific events. From some reason or the other, many mammoth had been caught in the ice of the river and had been frozen in, the ice never melting through all the thousands of years that followed. So well preserved were they at the time of their discovery that it is said they furnished food for dogs; but what amazed scientists most was to find that this elephant was covered with very long hair or fur, forming a protection against the cold such as few creatures possess. The fur and much of the skin of one of these mammoth may be seen in the museum at St. Petersburg.

We know from geologic evidence that Alaska, firm and solid land though it appears to be, is really slowly rising out of the sea, and we also know that this rising motion has been going on for a very long time. At a period which must have been many hundred years ago, the country was covered with a multitude of shallow lakes, many of them large, and some of immense size—rivalling our Great Lakes of the St. Lawrence river system. Most of these lakes are now drained and we have, as records of them, only broad flats composed of fine clays and silts which accumulated as sediments in the lake bottoms. Through this vast lake region roamed the mammoth in herds, and so far as we can tell the climate was much the same as it is now; but with the elevation of the land and the draining of the lakes the mammoth has disappeared—the reason no one is able to tell.

The Eskimos carve the mammoth tusks into ornaments, pipes, and other ivory articles. They are familiar, in fancy, with the animal, and have a special name for it, as well as for its ivory as distinguished from walrus ivory. They also have some vague legends about it, which the traveller may learn through an interpreter. At St. Michael's a Mahlemut Eskimo told me that a long time ago, when the whole country was full of lakes and darker than it is now, these animals were alive, and in the time of their fathers they were said to still exist, far in the interior, on the shores of a great lake; and that their fathers never went near this lake, hunting, for fear of this beast. It is more than likely, however, knowing what we do of the Eskimo habits and character, that this was simply fancy, which grew out of finding the tusks and the bones; or an invention, gotten up to satisfy the white man's curiosity, for the Eskimo is so willing to please that he always tells exactly what he thinks will be appreciated, whether or not it is the truth. Moreover, so far as I have been able to judge from other things, the Eskimo tradition does not run nearly so far back as it needs must to extend to the time of the mammoth.

Breaking camp one morning, just as the smoke was beginning to curl from the camp of our

Siwash neighbors on the other bank of the river, we ran rapidly down stream, and by the early afternoon passed the mouth of the Koyukuk. This is a large stream of clear water contrasting sharply with the muddy roily waters of the Yukon, from which it is separated almost by a distinct line. Above the rivers at the point of junction rises a beautiful sharp cliff, probably a thousand feet high and nearly perpendicular to the top.

On reaching this place we were met by heavy winds which tossed the surface of the river into waves, and where it blew against the current made a chop sea, so that the Skookum took in a good deal of water. Soon we were unable to make any headway at all against the wind, so we landed, and tracking our boat along the bank till we came to a little "slough" or shallow side channel where the water, protected by trees which grew on both sides, was smooth, we made camp. It was a flat smooth place, and the ground was covered thickly with fuzzy bright green plants of the horse-tail family, which made everything look so downy that one felt like rolling in it. These beautiful plants are easily crushed under foot, and a little tramping around had the effect of pressing out the water with which the sand was filled, and transforming all into a very soft mud. We had to keep our heavy boots on, therefore, especially around the fire, which is the most frequented spot in a pioneer's camp; and finally we had to lay poles along the path between the camp and the boat, to prevent slumping too deeply. To add to our discomforts, the rain came down in torrents that night, piercing our somewhat service-worn tent, so that by morning most of our outfit, including blankets, was more or less wet.

Starting out again, we found, soon after leaving our sheltered nook, that the wind was still blowing, and in stretches of the river where the wind was ahead we could move only very slowly, while on other curves we went at a high rate of speed. So we moved along by jerks till about noon, when we were brought to a standstill by an increase in the wind, and after an effort to proceed further, which resulted in our being blown back a little up the river, we landed, waited an hour and lunched; after this, the wind having gone down somewhat, we proceeded.

We passed several native villages, both winter and summer camps, the former with their clumsily built log houses and attendant log caches, the latter with their white tents and lines of fish drying on frames in front. The inhabitants shouted out vociferous greetings to us as we passed, which we did not understand; but we responded quite as cordially in our own tongue. At about five o'clock we reached the native village of Nulato, one of the largest on the river, with a population of several hundred, and a small trading post, at that time kept by a half-breed trader.

Our first question on landing was whether the steamer had passed down the Yukon for St. Michael's. This steamer would be the last which would make connections with Seattle or San Francisco, so if we missed it we would be obliged to remain all winter in the country. We knew approximately when the boat would leave Circle City, and from time to time, as we had been floating down the river, we had inquired at trading posts whether she had yet passed us, for this would be very easy by day in the many channels of the Flats, and still easier by night, especially as the river, even when confined in a single channel, is often several miles wide in this lower part, and a steamer passing on one side would hardly be observed from our camp on the other bank.

We had last heard at the station opposite the mouth of the Tanana that she had not yet passed, though she was daily expected—but that was several days ago. Of course we would have been able to lie by at any of these posts and camp until the steamer should arrive; but so great was our desire to make the best possible use of every minute we had to stay in Alaska that we preferred to take the risk of being left all winter, with an opportunity of building a log hut and laying in fire-wood till spring, rather than lose the last part of our journey in the Skookum. But we were relieved by the trader at Nulato, who told us that the steamer had not arrived. We were then given the use of a log cabin, with glass windows, which was sumptuously furnished with a stove, a hewn-wood bed, a table and a three-legged stool.

After supper we made the tour of the village, crawling into the little cabins of the natives, where the women sat cross-legged in groups, occupied in their sewing. They were making gloves of moose-skin trimmed with beaver, caps of the ground squirrel or marmot fur, and high boots of the hair seal with bottoms of walrus hide. Most of them used steel needles, though many still kept to those of pierced bone, which seemed in skillful hands to serve the purpose quite as well. Our curiosity was soon satisfied, for each dwelling was much like every other; so after we had made bargains for some of the articles, we went back to our cabin and turned in. The joy of having a roof over our heads as a protection against the rain which was now pelting down was so great that I lay awake some little time staring gloatingly up at the logs.

In the morning the one whose turn it was to cook rose early, and soon large kettles were full of beans, dried apples and rice, and all were boiling merrily away, while the bacon sizzled and smoked in the frying-pan. The other two of us lay lazily in our blankets, and sniffed the delicious odors, turning now and then from side to side when the hewn logs upon which we were lying grew conspicuously hard. Suddenly the door was burst open and a deaf-and-dumb Indian who had made himself useful the night before, bringing us wood and water in consideration of a square meal afterwards, rushed in, and with many gestures began to try to make us understand something. We had seen a surprisingly large number of deaf mutes among the natives, and they were always more easy to understand than the others, who had the habit of sputtering and choking away in their own tongue, although they knew very well that we did not understand a word of it; while the deaf mutes immediately enlightened us by some of the signs they were so practiced in making. This one, by energetic revolutions of his hands around one another, recalled to us immediately the stern-wheel of a steamboat, while the puffing he made with his mouth took away all doubt as to his meaning. Then he pointed up the river, and gesticulated violently.

We all turned out on the double quick, and, sure enough, the steamer was not more than a half a mile away. She was due to stop at Nulato a half hour to get wood, and so heavy was the traffic on the river at this time of the year and so important every hour in making connections with the ocean steamer that we knew she could not be got to stay longer. So we began hasty and energetic preparations, first rolling our blankets and strapping them with our personal outfit into the pack-sacks which we had carried throughout the trip, then hurriedly bundling together tents, specimens, and whatever else we deemed necessary and practicable to take out of Alaska with us. Many of the more cumbersome articles we abandoned, as they were much worn, and it would cost more than the original price to carry them back to the United States at the extraordinary prices for freight then prevailing. The natives soon became aware of our hurry and hung around in numbers, eager to help, but generally getting in the way; each had his eye on some article which he hoped to fall heir to. To many of these natives, poor beyond our ordinary conception of poverty, a nicked camp-axe is a substantial private fortune, and one Siwash to whom this article was awarded for general good conduct marched off in great happiness. Another fell heir to our boat—the faithful old Skookum, who had carried us two thousand miles, and now was somewhat battered and leaky as the result of her travels.

Meanwhile the steamer had swung in close to the flat high bank, the gang planks had been dropped down, and scores of natives, partly those of the village and partly those who had come on the steamer, scampered back and forth carrying wood on board in the most clumsy and ridiculous fashion, but still accomplishing much work by reason of their numbers. Miners, with whom the boat was crowded, came ashore and strolled around the village; they walked into our cabin and pestered us with idle and aimless questions, as we were working hard to get our stuff ready to take on board. At the last moment, when sufficient wood had been gotten in, the whistle was blown; we grabbed our pack-sacks and gave the remaining burdens to the natives to carry, and hurried on board. We had left some things, others than those mentioned. I felt then a keen regret, which occurs to me whenever I think of it, at being obliged to abandon all the good "grub" which had been boiling and frying away so merrily on the stove when our deaf-and-dumb friend had roused us from our dream.

None of us being enthusiastic cooks, it had been our custom to prepare large amounts of the stock articles of diet at a time, in order that one cooking, with some few additions, might last most of each man's allotted time of three days; so the quantity we left behind was ample to feed quite a number of Siwash, and I have no doubt they gorged themselves, and had lively times trying to see who could eat the most and the quickest.

The steamer was packed. Miners who had intended to go to the "Outside" this year, had waited as late as they dared, so as to work their claim and bring out as much as possible, and then had taken this last boat. We found every sleeping accommodation taken, and not until late in the afternoon did the steward's resources find us a place. The only available space left under cover was that occupied by the tables in the steerage division. After supper was eaten, these tables were taken out, and the floor-room thus gained was allotted us. The rest of the floor was already occupied, and we had to exercise great care to keep from rolling over into another man's preserves. We spread our rubber blankets on the deck to protect us from tobacco juice and other unpleasant things, and spread our woollen blankets on these. Lights were put out at about ten o'clock, and after that there was considerable stumbling around.

On the forward deck in front of the steerage department an active poker game, conducted by a professional gambler, was continually in progress, under a sail which had been rigged up as a cover. This game always wore on until midnight and attracted many interested spectators as well as players, all crowding around the table on which stacks of gold pieces were piled, under the light of a lantern tied overhead. When the men finally started to bed, they lost their bearings in the almost complete darkness and wandered far and wide, stumbling over the prostrate sleepers, whose loud and heartfelt oaths disturbed the peace almost as much as the hobnailed boots on one's stomach. At the first glimmer of dawn—*i. e.*, about three in the morning—we were routed out and made to roll up our blankets out of the way in order that the tables might be set up for a seven o'clock breakfast; so on the whole our sleep was light and short. Yet we had paid first-class fares on boarding the boat. I have since taken a comfortable two-weeks' voyage on a transatlantic steamer to Germany for the same price as I paid for this passage to St. Michael's, occupying four or five days.

The next day we stopped at the native village of Anvik. By this time we had left the land of the Indians or Ingeliks, which reaches down the river below Nulato, and had reached that of the Innuits or Eskimos. Anvik was the first Eskimo village I had seen and the impression I carried away with me was one of extreme disgust. The whole place was a human sty, from which arose an overpowering stink. The houses were mere shacks built of poles laid close together, with holes in the centre to allow the smoke to escape. All around the houses, in front, behind, and along the paths, was ordure. Most of the people whom we saw had the appearance of being diseased: whole rows of the maimed, the halt, the blind, and the scrofulous, sunned themselves in front of the huts. Others sat huddled in their long fur shirts or parkas (which constitute their only garment), and coughed constantly, too sick to show much interest in the white visitors. A little apart, in front of the houses, a woman squatted, sobbing, while beside her crouched an old crone with a mouth like a fish, who crooned incessantly a weird, monotonous and mournful chant, to which the sobbing woman made brief responses at intervals. Other women sat around in their doors, all looking sad, and many sobbing. A young Indian boy from the steamer, who had picked up some English in a mission school, explained the scene to us. "That woman's baby die," he said. "Everybody all day cry."

We were glad to turn away from the most dismal and degraded set of human beings it had ever been my lot to see; on our way back to the steamer we passed a building of sawed boards used as a mission, and met the missionary, who was properly attired in a suit of clerical black, with white linen and tie. He had a book in his hand. I had rather seen him dressed in a parka, with an axe over his shoulder.

Below Anvik a short distance, we came to the Holy Cross Mission, a Catholic station located at another Eskimo village. The village was only a little better than that of Anvik to look at, but somewhat better to smell of. The mission itself, however, was a model. The buildings were well-built and clean, and there was a flourishing garden, containing potatoes, rutabagas, cabbages and lettuce, the whole surrounded by a rail fence; and in another little enclosure there was a real live cow, almost as much a novelty to us as to the natives from further up the river, who left the steamboat and pressed around the strange animal with wondering eyes, as children view the elephant at their first circus. We saw many little girls, pupils of the school, spotlessly arrayed in new calico dresses, with gay silk or cotton handkerchiefs on their heads. They made quite a pretty picture, and the contrast of the little maidens with their relatives at Anvik was something almost startling. These children had been taken away from their parents by the sisters who teach at the Mission and were being brought up by them, to be sent away again only when grown.

Between the Holy Cross Mission and the Yukon delta the river grows continually wider till it is in places fully five miles from bank to bank, without islands. The banks themselves become low and very flat, and the timber disappears almost entirely, leaving the swampy plains known as tundra. Along here the only fuel is driftwood; and this the natives had stacked up in places ready for the steamer. Landing to take on wood was always the opportunity for a run on shore, dickering with the natives for curiosities, and general hilarity. The people here were wonderfully different from those on the Yukon from Nulato to the headwaters, being round and rosy, rather small in stature, and with a certain Mongolian appearance. They are childlike in look and action, with round wondering eyes, and mouths always ready to smile broadly and unreservedly at any hint of a joke. They were dressed in the Eskimo parka, made of furs of various sorts, especially squirrel, mink, reindeer, or muskrat. The whole sustenance of the people in this barren tundra district appeared to be fish, and many of them had been obliged to make their parkas and leggings out of the fish skins, which were sewn together with much neatness and taste, and were ornamented with red ochre. In wet weather they wore long shirts made of the entrails of animals, split open and sewn together; these had tight-fitting hoods and sleeves, and were practically watertight. The Eskimo kayak or covered boat, made by stretching seal or walrus skins over a wooden frame, makes its appearance along here, although the birch canoe is still to be seen. In the houses of these people we saw sealskins full of oil laid up as a provision against the winter.

THREE-HATCH SKIN BOAT, OR BIDARKA.

At a mission further up the river a Russian priest of the Greek Catholic church had gotten on board. He wore the plain black gown, full beard and long hair of men of his class, and spoke broken English. He seemed well acquainted with the country, however, and assured us that these people were distinct both from the Kolchane or Indians, who were found all along the Yukon above Nulato, and from the Mahlemut Eskimos. These middle people he called Kwikpaks; but I am sure they are really Eskimos, with perhaps some peculiarities, due to their position on the border-line of two races differing so greatly as do the Eskimos and the Indians.

The same day we left the Yukon for good, emerging from the northern or Ap-hoon mouth, (for the Yukon forms a delta which spreads out many miles and includes many channels) out on the open sea. We were struck with the color of the clear green water, after so long viewing the muddy brown Yukon or the clear black of some of its tributaries. Before us the country was barren, untimbered, and black, with volcanic cones rising here and there. As we advanced, low islands rose out of the sea around these cones,—fields of lava, covered with swamps and ponds,—while we left behind us the dead level untimbered tundra of the Yukon delta. We anchored under the lee of an island that night, and as usual we were roused from our sleeping places before daylight the next morning by the cook. The sun rose gloriously from behind the low black volcanic hills and just as we were getting around to breakfast at the fourth table we steamed into St. Michael's.

CHAPTER IX.

ST. MICHAEL'S AND SAN FRANCISCO.

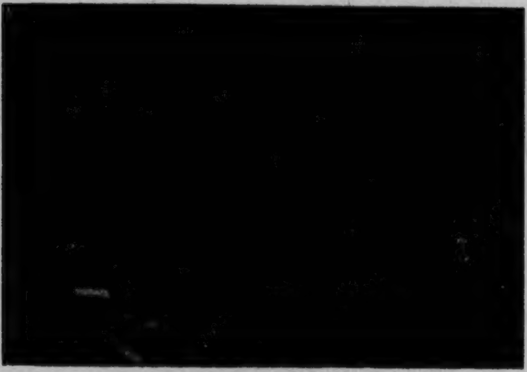
ST. MICHAEL'S is the usual port for the Yukon, though seventy miles from its mouth. The Russians had a fort and garrison at this place before they sold the territory to the United States, and since then the commercial companies have had posts here. The chief part of the population, however, consists of Eskimos.

These people are very expert in carving. From stone they make axes, lamps, skin-scrapers and many other implements; and from bone, and especially from the walrus and mammoth ivory, they carve many things, among them polished pipes. These pipes are evidently modelled after the opium pipes of the East, with a peculiar shaped bowl having only a very small cavity in it, and a long stem. They are ornamented with many figures scratched on the ivory with a sharp knife, and then colored by having charcoal and grease rubbed into the scratches; these figures, of which there may be several hundred on a single pipe, represent the Eskimo in his daily occupations, especially his hunting of deer, wolf, and whale, his dancing in the *kashim*, or his travelling in his kayak.

Strolling around the village, and peering into the *barabarras*, or private houses, I ran across an old savage who was handling an object which immediately attracted my attention; when he saw my curiosity he explained by signs that it was an apparatus for making fire, and at my request he actually performed the feat. It was

Eskimo Houses at St. Michael's.

the old plan of rubbing two sticks of wood together, such as we have often read that savages do; yet I had never known any one who knew exactly how it was done, although as a boy I had often worn myself out in vain endeavors to make



A NATIVE DOORWAY.

fire in this way. So far as I know, no one had ever satisfactorily explained how the Alaskan natives get their fire, one writer having even supposed that they brought it from volcanoes in the first place; and from the extraordinary care which they take in preserving hot coals and often in carrying them considerable distances, one does not often see them in the process of obtaining a new supply.

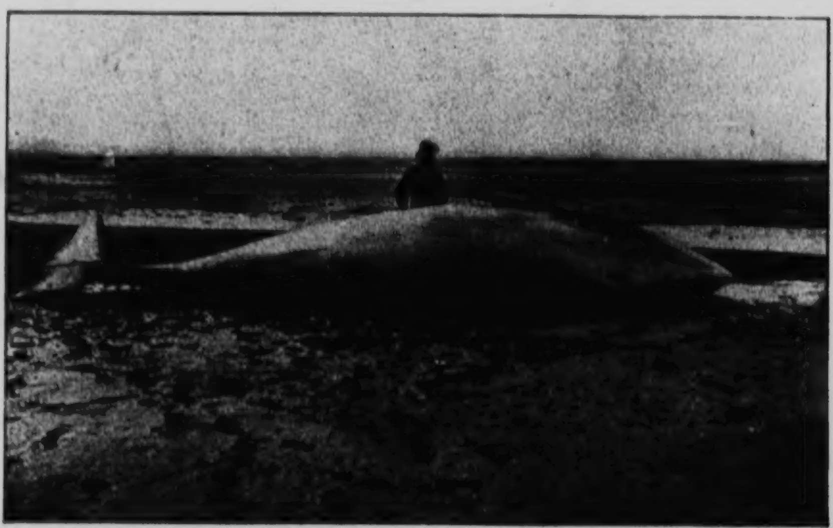
The apparatus which I saw here used was simple and ingenious. In a thoroughly dry stick of spruce were cut a number of little grooves,—this was the wood destined to catch fire. The other piece of wood was a rounded stick of some very hard variety, which the Eskimo told me was picked up in the driftwood along the shore: it was very likely a foreign wood. The point of the hard stick was set upright in one of the grooves of the soft dry piece and by means of a leather thong was made to revolve rapidly in it, the hard upright piece being kept in place by a stone socket set in a piece of wood, which was held in the mouth of the operator. After vigorously twirling the stick by means of the thong for about a minute the soft wood began to smoke; a moment afterwards a faint spark was visible. Then the Eskimo stopped revolving the stick and heaping all the fine dust of the soft wood which had been worn off by the grinding on the spark, and blew it carefully till it grew to larger dimensions; then he placed a blade of dry grass on the spark, and, blowing again, it burst into flame.

The whole process had lasted about three minutes. The old man explained also that in boring the holes in stone, bone or ivory, they used the same device, employing a stone drill instead of the wooden stick.

There was great commotion among the natives at St. Michael's the morning after we arrived, and the men all dragged their kayaks into the water and getting into them paddled out into the harbor, where a number of small whales were seen disporting themselves. When they neared the school the men separated, and when a whale would sound they spread themselves out so as to be nearly at the spot where he should come up. Each man had several of the light spears they used for capturing fish; these weapons are perhaps three and a half feet long, and weigh about a pound, the shaft being slender and of light wood and the tip of a barbed piece of bone. To each of these they had fastened by a long thong, as they were paddling out, a blown-up bladder. As soon as a whale rose the Eskimo who happened to be near sent his little spear with great force deeply into its flesh. The wound was of course insignificant, and the animal, taking alarm, sank into the water again; but when after some time he was forced to return to the surface, he encountered several hunters again, and received several more spears with attached bladders. This time the buoyancy of the bladders made it difficult for him to sink, and he rose soon afterwards, only to be filled with so many spears that the bladders kept him from sinking at all; then the natives drew near and with all kinds of weapons cut and slashed and worried the creature till he finally gave up from loss of blood, and died. Then he was towed ashore amid great excitement and with rejoicing, not only by the hunters, but by the women, children and old men who flocked down to the beach as it came in.

The next thing was to cut up and divide the carcass, and this was done thoroughly, everybody in the village coming in for a share. Nothing was wasted. Even the blood was carefully saved and divided, and the sinews were given to the women, who would dry and make them into threads for sewing. Soon all the fires in the village were burning, and the smell of boiling whale-flesh came from many pots, into which the women peered expectantly. One old lady whom I noticed doing this showed in her dress some of the effects of civilization, which is a rare thing with the Eskimo, as they dress by preference in their squirrel or muskrat-skin parkas; her flowing garment was made of flour-sacks sewn together, and one might read the legend, inscribed many times and standing in many attitudes, that the wearer (presumably) was Anchor Brand.

St. Michael's is made up of volcanic rock, and has been lifted from the sea in recent geologic times. The natives know this, and say that they find lines of driftwood marking the ancient limit of the waves, at places far above where the highest water now reaches; on the other hand, they say that the island has been thrice submerged since the memory of man. Out of the general swampy level of the land around the village rise, further back, broken cones with old craters at their tops; these were very likely under the level of the sea when they were active. We had time to spend a few days wandering over this country, climbing through the rocky craters, and looking down on the numberless swamp



THE CAPTURED WHALE.

lakes which cover the southeast side of the island. One day, however, we received sudden word that the steamer on which we had engaged passage was about to sail, and we hurried on board. That night we were far out on Behring Sea, tossing in a strong wind which soon increased to a terrific gale.

We lay several days "hove to" in this gale, with oil casks over the bows to break the great waves which threatened more than once to smash us and often seemed about to roll us over and over. Finally, however, it quieted enough to let the seasick ones drop asleep, while the sailors made things taut again, and before long we were in harbor at the island of Unalaska —one of the great chain of Aleutian islands which reaches from America to Asia, and the chief stopping point for nearly all boats between the Yukon mouth and the coast of the United States proper. Unalaska is a country of chaotically wild scenery. The streams in turn meander over level benches and then tumble in waterfalls over steep cliffs to the next bench, and so on till they reach the sea; such a cataract we saw on the right as we entered the harbor.

In the village here we found the Aleuts semi-civilized from their long contact with white men, for here the Russians held direct control long before the territory was sold to the United States; they live in neat wooden houses, and if one peeps in by night he may even see here and there lace curtains and rocking-chairs.

Seventeen days after leaving St. Michael's we finally reached San Francisco. It was a clear, fine Sunday when we passed through the Golden Gate, tingling with excitement which we had felt since seeing the first land on the California coast. The sight of the multitude of houses on the hillside, the smoke of the city, the craft of all kinds going back and forth, had in it something very strange and discomposing for us. It was only when the ship was at the dock, and we had gone ashore, that we realized, from the way the curious crowd formed a circle around us and stared in open-mouthed wonder, that our appearance was unusual for a city. We had not taken much baggage through the Yukon country, and our camp clothes were very shabby. None of us had had opportunity to have hair and beard trimmed since we left—with the result that we had a mane reaching to the shoulders and fierce bushy buccaneer whiskers, inches deep all around. Two of us wore ancient high leather boots and the third wore a kind of moccasin. We all had heavy "mackinaw" trousers of blanket-cloth, with belted coats of the same material, while coarse flannel shirts and dilapidated felt hats, burned with the sparks of many a camp-fire and seamed with the creases of many a night's sleep, completed our costume.

Finding the attention of the crowd embarrassing, we took a carriage for the Grand Hotel, and as we were driving through the streets I noticed that if one so much as caught a glimpse of our faces through the carriage window, he would turn and stare after the cab till it was out of sight. It was Sunday afternoon, and the streets were filled with smartly dressed men and women. For our part, the sight of all this correct and conventional dressing made a disagreeable impression on us, after so long a period of free and easy life; the white collars and cuffs of the men, in particular, obtruded themselves on my attention and irritated me.

We had left our "store clothes" in Seattle and had to telegraph to get them. It took a couple of days for this, and in the meantime we had only to wait. We had been looking forward to going to the theatre as soon as we should arrive in San Francisco, and when our clothes did not arrive, were disappointed, till we suddenly braced up in defiance of the whole city, and said, "Let's go anyhow." We had not had time to get our hair and beard trimmed, and our costume was in all respects the same as when we left Circle City, but we sallied out bravely. We were late at the theatre, and the play had already begun; it was a popular one, and the only seats left were some in the "bald-headed" row.

Although we had by this time the idea forced on us that our appearance was unusual, we were by no means prepared for the commotion which we brought about, as we walked up the broad aisle to our seats. There was a hum and a sizzle of whispers throughout the house, which changed to laughter and exclamations; and the actors on the stage, catching sight of us, got "rattled" and forgot to go on. Up in the peanut gallery the gods began to indulge in catcalls and make personal inquiries. We hurried to our seats to escape this storm, and meeting an usher thrust our tickets into his hand. He looked at us with a puzzled air and a broad grin, as if he thought it all some huge joke, but we were getting nervous, and gave him a glare which made him indicate our seats for us. The audience evidently believed we were part of the show; many were standing by this time, waiting to see what the next would be, but after a while the buzz subsided and the play went on. There was a constant current of conversation about us, however; behind us a young fellow was excitedly asking his companion "Who are they, who are they?" "Don't know," said the other. "Sailors, I guess."

After a while we felt like returning to the solitude of our hotel rooms; the play, too, did not please us, so in the middle of an act we got up, and having remarked very audibly "Dis is a rotten show," we went. As we started down the aisle the commotion grew louder than ever, and we slipped quickly out and down a side street.

FINIS.